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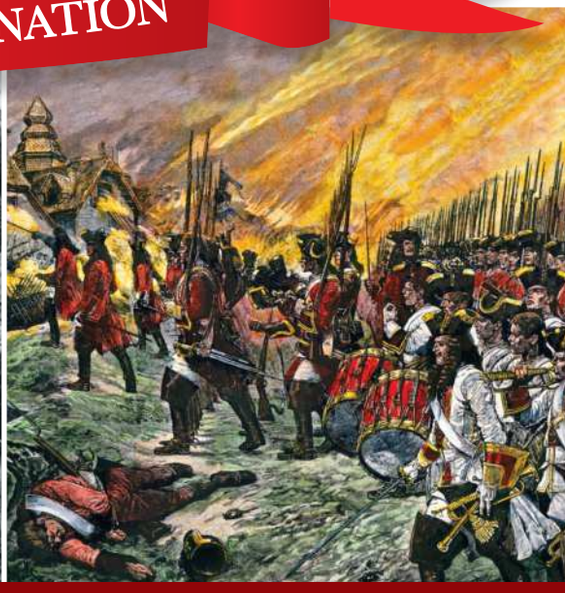
HISTORY of WAR Book of

BRITAIN'S GREATEST VICTORIES

DISCOVER THE MAKINGS OF A NATION







Digital Edition

FUTURE

FIFTH EDITION

LEGENDARY LEADERS • HISTORIC BATTLES • ICONIC MOMENTS



HISTORY WAR —Book of—

BRITAIN'S GREATEST VICTORIES

War has often been the chosen course for seeking resolution throughout history, as nations have fought to defend their identity. As such, much of Britain's history is determined by defeating other nations in battle. The History of War Book of Britain's Greatest Victories explores 20 of Britain's most iconic triumphs. Through in-depth articles, detailed battle maps, illustrations and photographs, we examine the strategies and tactics behind some of the biggest conflicts, analysing important decisions made by key players and discovering just how Britain came out on top. From epic European battles, such as Trafalgar and Waterloo, to global conflicts like Aliwal and Rorke's Drift; and from the gruesome battles of World War I and World War II to more recent conflicts in the Falklands and Afghanistan, we take a look at the British victories that have gone down in military history and helped shape a nation.


FUTURE

BRITAIN'S GREATEST VICTORIES

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

Editorial
Editor **Sarah Bankes**
Compiled by **Sarah Bankes & Andy Downes**
Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**
Head of Art & Design **Greg Whitaker**
Editorial Director **Jon White**

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Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

International
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
licensing@futurenet.com
www.futurecontenthub.com

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Matthew Eglinton**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Managers **Keely Miller, Nola Cokely, Vivienne Calvert, Fran Twentyman**

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Chief executive **Zillah Byng-Thorne**
Non-executive chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief financial officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

Part of the

HISTORY of WAR

bookazine series





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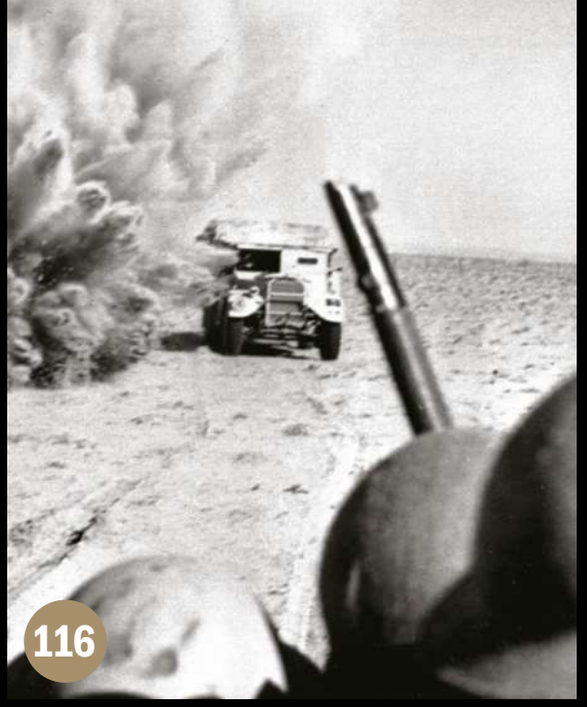
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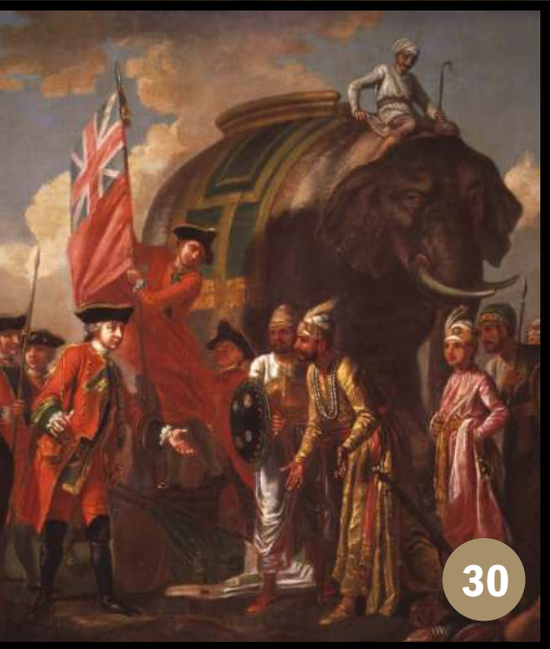
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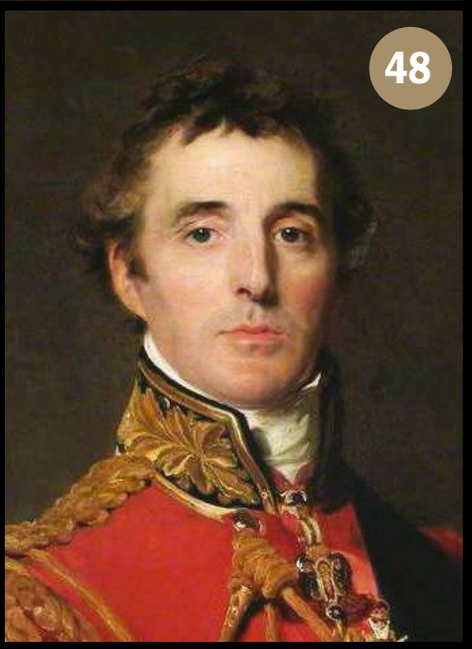





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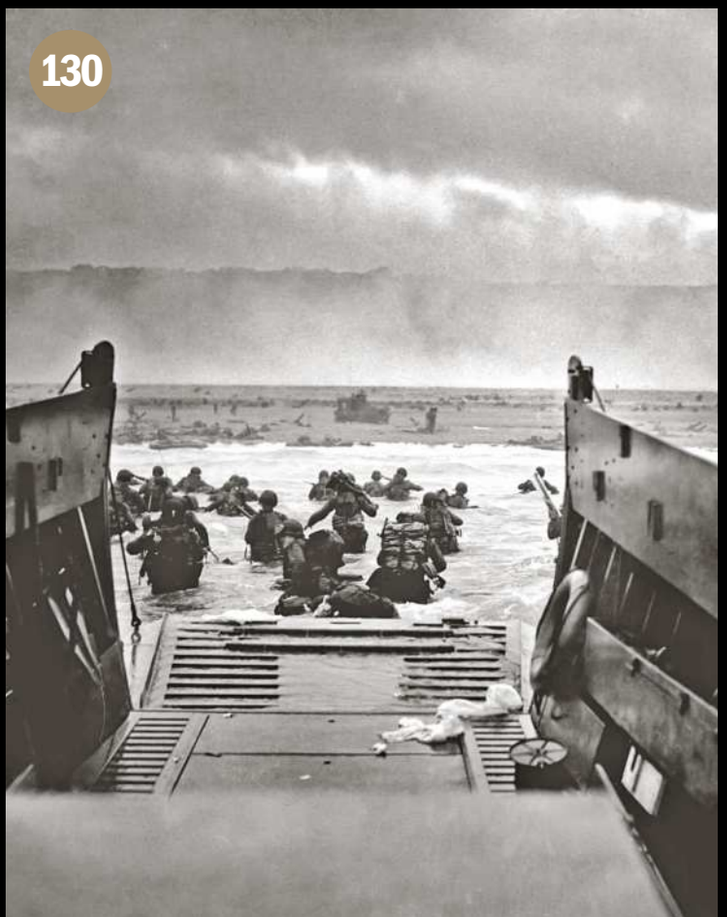

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20 ICONIC BRITISH VICTORIES



EAST INDIA COMPANY LIFESPAN
1600-1874 ■ INDIA

JACOBITE RISING OF 1715
1715 ■ Britain

BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE ARRIVES IN SCOTLAND
23 July 1745 ■ Eriskay Island

1600 — 1704 — 1715 — 1745

1. BATTLE OF BLENHEIM

13 AUGUST 1704 BLENHEIM, SOUTHERN GERMANY

The War of the Spanish Succession began in 1702 after the death of Charles II of Spain took Europe to war. The French Army was the premier fighting force of the era, and at Blenheim 60,000 of its men, including Bavarian allies, faced off against 56,000 from the Grand Alliance, a combination of forces from Britain, the Netherlands and the Holy Roman Empire. The French were convinced that the short-supplied Grand Alliance would retreat, but the British commander the duke of Marlborough decided to stand and fight. The battle began at 2am with a British advance. Unprepared for an assault in the early hours, the French centre was weakened. Keeping French cavalry attacks at bay, Marlborough launched wave after wave of attack that proved too much for the shocked French troops. French commander Marshall Tallard was captured and his armies cornered in the village of Blenheim with no other option but to surrender. 40,000 were killed, wounded or captured, with the French suffering a huge blow to their war effort.



The Jacobites fought to reinstate the House of Stuart onto the British throne

2.BATTLE OF CULLODEN

16 APRIL 1746 CULLODEN, SCOTLAND

A bloodbath that ended the final Jacobite Rebellion, Culloden was the last ever pitched battle to be fought in Britain. Led by the vengeful duke of Cumberland, the British Army had tracked the retreating Jacobites back into Scotland after the march of the '45 had previously made it as far south as Derby. The exhausted 5,000 Jacobite troops were no match for the 9,000 strong royal army and its superior artillery.

The British six-pounder guns thundered into the Jacobite core with the impact of its feared Highland charge minimised by the boggy terrain of the battlefield. The fleeing Jacobites were hunted down and the Highland clan system was destroyed once and for all. Their leader, the Young Pretender 'Bonnie Prince Charlie', escaped to a life of obscurity in France. The Jacobites would never rise again.

1746 1754 1757

SEVEN YEARS' WAR
1754-1763 ■ Worldwide



Siraj-ud-Daulah was intent on removing the British from his territory but was betrayed by Mir Jafar

3.BATTLE OF PLASSEY

23 JUNE 1757
BENGAL, INDIA

British commander Colonel Robert Clive described it as the climax of his career, and it was indeed a vital victory that ushered in almost 200 years of British rule in India. Both the French and British East India Companies desired to conquer India, and in this battle the French gave assistance to the Nawab of Bengal Siraj-ud-Daulah in a bid to oust the British. Despite the French support, Nawab's forces were crippled by turncoats that had restricted their numbers, but the British troops still lined up against far greater numbers. The turning point in the battle came when one third of all the Bengali troops, led by commander Mir Jafar, refused to come to the aid of their allies. The British guns fired into the cavalry, after the French and Bengali artillery was rendered useless by the rain that was lashing down. This sent Siraj-ud-Daulah's troops into disarray. They never recovered and made a hasty retreat.



The battle gave Britain control over most of New France, which later became Canada

4.BATTLE OF QUEBEC

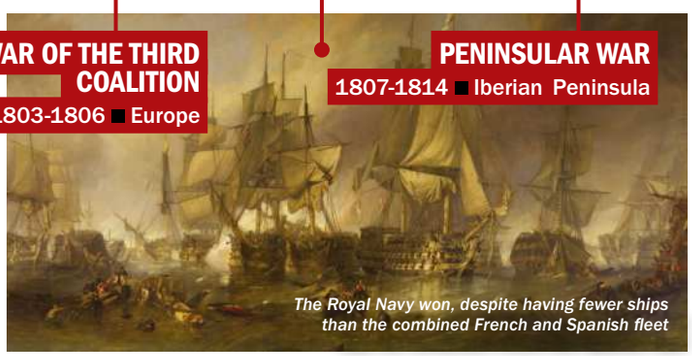
13 SEPTEMBER 1759 QUEBEC, CANADA

Part of the North American theatre of the Seven Years' War, the Battle of Quebec was of critical importance. A British and American coalition faced a French and Canadian alliance that was protecting the city of Quebec. The British attacked under the cover of darkness in the early hours, as infantry disembarked from their boats and scaled the cliffs. The French commanders got wind of the impending attack and hurriedly took up arms, but on arrival were welcomed by volleys of musket fire. The British attack faltered briefly after General James Wolfe was struck down, but Brigadier-General George Townshend stepped into the fray and managed to reorganise and rally the British to a vital victory. Quebec surrendered and by the end of the war, the French colonial stake in North America was almost non-existent.

1759 1803 1805 1807 1812

WAR OF THE THIRD COALITION
1803-1806 ■ Europe

PENINSULAR WAR
1807-1814 ■ Iberian Peninsula



The Royal Navy won, despite having fewer ships than the combined French and Spanish fleet

5.BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR

21 OCTOBER 1805 CAPE TRAFALGAR

In 1805, the Napoleonic Wars were at their height. While the French Grande Armée dominated on land, Britain ruled the waves, and the Royal Navy had long protected the British Isles from a French invasion. Battle began after the fleets met just off the coast of southern Spain. The French were backed by their Spanish allies, but the British were under the inspirational leadership of national hero Admiral Horatio Nelson. Nelson, from the bridge of his flagship HMS Victory, galvanised his troops with his now famous 'England expects' signal. The battle was fierce, and as 60 ships of the line duked it out, the Royal Navy emerged victorious thanks primarily to the superior leadership shown by Nelson who was critically injured during the battle. Victory at Trafalgar gave Britain naval supremacy of the seas, and the French opportunity for an invasion was lost forever.



The British were commanded by Wellington, who would also be in command at Waterloo

6.BATTLE OF SALAMANCA

22 JULY 1812 SALAMANCA, SPAIN

The Peninsular War was a major theatre of combat during the Napoleonic Wars. By 1812, the French had begun to lose their grip on the Iberian peninsula, and the Battle of Salamanca was a pivotal victory for the British and Portuguese forces. Both sides were around 50,000 strong and after being unwilling to engage each other for weeks, the French made the first move with an attempted flanking manoeuvre. Wellington had pre-empted this tactic and rebuffed the attack, resulting in the French line becoming overextended. The French recovered from this early setback to hold their lines in both east and west sides of the battlefield. The hard-fought battle ended with a desperate French last stand after being overwhelmed. The tide of the Peninsular War turned as the British and Portuguese forces marched further inland towards Madrid and its pro-French government.



The 'Iron Duke' described the battle as a "damn close-run thing"

7.BATTLE OF WATERLOO 18 JUNE 1815 WATERLOO, BELGIUM

Escaping from confinement on the Isle of Elba in March 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte was out for revenge. The defeated emperor roused his loyal French followers for a final showdown against his enemies. Marching north, they encountered the British just south of Brussels, and were intent on destroying them before the arrival of their Prussian allies. The British were led by veteran commander the duke of Wellington and were boosted by conscripted Dutch and German allies. They numbered 68,000, still smaller than the 72,000 Napoleon had at his disposal. The battle began with the French unleashing their cannons on the British. Elsewhere on the field, fierce and ultimately pivotal fighting took place at the farmhouse of Hougoumont. The British infantry heroically just managed to hold off French cavalry charges, Napoleon's Imperial Guard and cannon salvos until 45,000 Prussians arrived. The French were spent and, unable to fight on against two armies, crashed to defeat. Napoleon was exiled to the remote South Atlantic island of St Helena, and this time for good.

1815 — 1845 — 1846

NAPOLEON'S HUNDRED DAYS
20 March – 8 July 1815 ■ France

FIRST ANGLO-SIKH WAR
1845-1846 ■ Punjab, South Asia

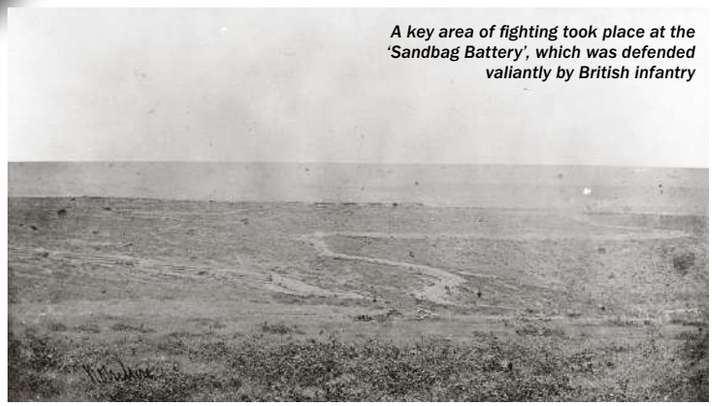


The battle was a key victory against the Sikhs who lost 3,000 men and 67 guns

8.BATTLE OF ALIWAL

28 JANUARY 1846
PUNJAB, INDIA

One of the decisive battles of the First Sikh War, 12,000 British and Bengali soldiers defeated a 30,000 strong Sikh army. The Sikh army was called the Khalsa and its soldiers wielded their signature weapon the kirpan, a traditional curved sword. The battle began after the British had pursued the Sikhs towards the villages of Aliwal and Bhundri. After the Sikh artillery had made short work of a British advance, the British attacked through Aliwal, their light cavalry quickly driving the Sikh mounted and foot regiments back. The cavalry charges forced the Sikh army to retreat across the river to Bhundri, with an effective and devastating combination of artillery and cavalry assaults winning the day. The Sikh infantry were no match for the 16th Queen's Lancers who played a key role in the outcome, losing 144 of the total of 589 British casualties. The Battle of Aliwal was an emphatic victory.



A key area of fighting took place at the 'Sandbag Battery', which was defended valiantly by British infantry

9.BATTLE OF INKERMAN

5 NOVEMBER 1854 CRIMEA, UKRAINE

This battle, in the early stages of the Crimean War, took place after the Battle of Balaklava that included the ill-fated Charge of the Light Brigade. The Russian strategy was to drive the British from their positions on Mount Inkerman. As they advanced forward in the early hours, with the rain lashing down, the Russians unleashed a barrage of artillery fire but were forced to retreat by a determined British counterattack. Thick fog caused major communication and coordination issues for both sides, but played into the hands of the numerically inferior British and their French allies. The intense fighting ebbed and flowed before the Russians eventually gave up at around 2.30pm. The British and French had held their ground as the Russians were forced to withdraw. There were huge losses on both sides, but it was the Russians who were left licking far greater wounds.

10.BATTLE OF RORKE'S DRIFT

22 JANUARY 1879 NATAL PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

The defence of 139 British soldiers against 4,500 Zulus is one of the greatest last stands in the history of the British army. After a humiliating defeat at the Battle of Isandlwana, the small garrison of Rorke's Drift came under attack from a force of Zulus led by Dabulamanzi kaMpande. From 4pm, wave after wave of Zulu attacks struck the compound that had been hastily barricaded with no more than sandbags and biscuit boxes. Led by John Chard and Gonville Bromhead, the defence lasted long into the night before the attacks finally subsided at dawn, after 12 hours of fierce, unrelenting combat. Eleven Victoria Crosses were awarded to the brave troops – still the most ever awarded for a single action.



The thatched roof of the compound's hospital caught fire and illuminated the battle as the sun set

BATTLE OF ISANDLWANA
22 January 1879 ■ Isandlwana, South Africa

BATTLE OF FLERS
15-22 September 1916 ■ Northern France

1848

SECOND ANGLO-SIKH WAR
1848-1849 ■ Punjab

1854

CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE
25 October 1854 ■ Crimea

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE ARRIVES IN CRIMEA
5 November 1854 ■ Crimea

1879

1916



The death toll on the first day of the Somme is still a record high in one day of warfare

11.BATTLE OF THE SOMME

1 JULY – 18 NOVEMBER 1916 NORTHERN FRANCE

The Battle of the Somme was a bloody battle of attrition that ultimately resulted in British strategic gains. The British recorded a staggering 58,000 casualties on the first day, after tactical miscues from commanders Haig and Joffre meant the bombardment that preceded the battle did not destroy the German trenches as intended. This resulted in a bloodbath where British soldiers advancing through no-man's-land were cut down by German machine guns. After the bloody first day, the British and French made important territorial gains in a sustained offensive that wore down the Germans' mettle and drained their resources. The battle also relieved the pressure on the French divisions at Verdun, which were struggling from a huge German onslaught. The gains from the Somme continue to divide historians, but despite the death toll, the battle was a ground-out military success that did much to lessen German morale for the war effort as British and French began to grind down the resolve of the enemy.



The tank was first used at the Battle of Flers before being deployed in huge numbers at Cambrai

12.BATTLE OF CAMBRAI

20 NOVEMBER – 7 DECEMBER 1917 CAMBRAI, FRANCE

The British pioneered the tank in World War I, and Cambrai marked its first large-scale use. The battle began at dawn with an attack on the heavily defended German Hindenburg Line. 476 of the new tanks advanced under cover of the bombardment. The Hindenburg Line was broken for the first time in the war, with 7,500 German prisoners captured on day one. After the initial success, the British advance slowed in the face of German counterattacks, but the mechanised attack had proven to the British that the tank was a weapon of war for the future, and it became more reliable and more potent as an offensive weapon as World War I continued.

13.BATTLE OF AMIENS

8-11 AUGUST 1918 AMIENS, FRANCE

The Battle of Amiens was a turning point that finally signalled a beginning to the end of bloodshed on the Western Front. After German offensives in the first half of the year, the British, French and Americans had struck back with the summer Aisne-Marne offensive. After this had pushed the Germans back, the British prepared a surprise attack at Amiens. The first day was a resounding success as German divisions were routed and surrendered en masse. The British attack was supported by Canadian, Australian and French forces, and was an expert coordination of infantry, artillery, tanks and aircraft. Amiens was followed by more success at the Battle of Bapaume as the Germans began to retreat before their final collapse in November 1918.



The Germans recorded up to 70,000 casualties in what was a pivotal battle

OTTOMAN EMPIRE LIFESPAN
1299-1922 ■ SOUTH EAST EUROPE/ASIA MINOR

1917 | 1918 | 1919 | 1922

14.BATTLE OF MEGIDDO

19-25 SEPTEMBER 1918 TEL MEGIDDO, SYRIA

SIGNING OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES
28 June 1919 ■ Versailles, Francea

As Allies gained the upper hand on the Western Front, they had success against the Ottoman Empire in the east. Allied to Germany, the Ottomans had been fighting on two fronts against the British and Russians. The British attack, orchestrated by Edmund Allenby, took place on the Plain of Sharon and was made easier by Allenby convincing the Ottomans that a major attack would take place in the Jordan valley to the east. With the Ottoman forces divided, an artillery bombardment battered their defences before a cavalry charge. As enemy soldiers began to flee, Allied aircraft blocked the road, forcing them into the hills. Following this vital victory, the British captured Beirut and Aleppo in October.



The battle was one of the final acts of the British invasion of Palestine in World War I



Britain stood alone after the German Blitzkrieg had defeated France


The British attack benefited from an influx of new Sherman tanks

15.BATTLE OF BRITAIN

JULY-OCTOBER 1940 ENGLISH CHANNEL/ SOUTH-EAST ENGLAND

After the hurried withdrawal at Dunkirk, Britain was now under threat. If Hitler destroyed the RAF, Operation Sea Lion, the planned German invasion of the British Isles, could take place. British Spitfires and Hurricanes fought aerial dogfights with the German Messcherschmitts as the Luftwaffe's Junker bombers tried to destroy RAF airfields. Despite the continued attacks, the Luftwaffe were losing planes and hampered by having no chance to refuel over foreign soil. Another major factor was Hermann Göring's decision to focus the Luftwaffe bombing campaign on cities instead of radar stations. RAF Fighter Command fought on until September when, in the face of mounting losses, Hitler called off the attack and turned east to concentrate on a war with the Soviet Union. With the threat of invasion over, Winston Churchill famously said: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

16.SECOND BATTLE OF EL-ALAMEIN

23 OCTOBER – 11 NOVEMBER 1942 EL ALAMEIN, EGYPT

The key battle of the North African theatre in World War II, El-Alamein involved two of World War II's finest commanders: Montgomery and Rommel. 'The Desert Fox' attacked from the south in a rapid advance that was punctured by the panzer divisions rolling over strategically placed British mines. The immobile panzers became sitting ducks for incoming RAF bombers. 'Monty' knew the Germans were low on fuel and under Operation Bertram, fooled Rommel by constructing dummy tanks. Wave after wave of British and Australian attacks destroyed the beleaguered and outnumbered Germans. The close-run victory prevented the Germans from reaching the Suez Canal, and the Afrika Korps finally surrendered in May 1943.

1940 1942 1944

17.BATTLE OF IMPHAL

MARCH-JULY 1944 IMPHAL, INDIA

It may not be as well-known as other battles during World War II, but the British defence of Imphal was of critical importance. The Japanese had been moving swiftly through South-East Asia, overcoming anything that the British Burma Corps could throw at them. Their advance was so rapid that their supply lines had actually become overstretched, which would cause a problem at the Battle of Imphal. The Japanese laid siege against a combined force of British, Gurkha and Indian troops. Before Imphal buckled under the relentless Japanese attack, an Allied victory at nearby Kohima released troops to attack the Japanese rear. After 53,000 causalities, the Japanese had no option but to retreat, and in doing so, their drive west ceased.

OPERATION DRAGOON
15 August – 14 September 1944
Southern France


Five Victoria Crosses were awarded for the heroic defence as the re-conquest of Burma began

18.NORMANDY LANDINGS

6 JUNE 1944 NORMANDY, FRANCE

An amphibian assault on the French coastline put Allied soldiers back in Western Europe for the first time since Dunkirk. Lessons had been learnt since the disastrous 1942 Dieppe raid and huge preparations had been made. Artificial harbours were erected off the beaches while minesweepers cleared the bays ready for the landings. The operation was codenamed Neptune and by the end of 6 June, 150,000 men had landed in France to storm the beaches of Normandy. Ably assisted by airborne divisions, the Allied assault caught the Wehrmacht by surprise. The French cities of Bayeux, Cherbourg and Caen were soon taken as air support helped dismantle the German panzers. The success initiated Operation Overlord as the German's Atlantic Wall dissolved after six weeks of fierce fighting. With Operation Dragoon bursting through Southern France a few weeks later, the liberation of Europe had begun.



The success of D-Day was helped by increasing Soviet attacks on the Eastern Front

GENERAL BELGRANO SUNK
2 May 1982 ■ Falkland Islands

FALL OF PORT STANLEY
14 June 1982 ■ Falkland Islands

1944 — 1982 — 2007



The hilly wide-open terrain meant maintaining secrecy was tough

19.BATTLE OF GOOSE GREEN

28-29 MAY 1982 FALKLAND ISLANDS

Landing discreetly at San Carlos Bay, members of the 2nd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment yomped across peat bogs to engage the Argentinian 12th Regiment. With two days' worth of rations and ammo, their mission was to come to the aid of the 114 Falkland civilians at Goose Green and Darwin. Under heavy fire, the two-pronged British attack used anti-tank rockets to blow the Argentinians out of their trenches near Darwin. Advancing to Goose Green, 2nd Battalion issued an ultimatum to the defending garrison. It surrendered and Goose Green was successfully captured for the loss of 17 paratroopers and over 200 Argentinians. The British losses included the mission's leader, Lieutenant-Colonel H Jones, who was posthumously awarded a Victoria Cross for his bravery and tactical acumen.



The Afghan flag was raised above the town after the battle

20.BATTLE OF MUSA QALA

7-12 DECEMBER 2007 HELMAND PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN

British soldiers were first deployed in Afghanistan in November 2001 in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. One of the towns occupied by the British troops was Musa Qala. It was exposed to many attacks from the Taliban throughout 2006 and 2007. The largest of the assaults was over three days during December 2007. The coalition of troops garrisoned at Musa Qala included both US, UK, Danish and Estonian soldiers as well as members of the Afghan National Army. The Taliban were eventually driven back into their mountain hideouts. The battle is an example of the threat the Taliban held, but also the skill and professionalism employed by NATO forces.

1700-1800s

From epic European battles, such as Trafalgar and Waterloo, to the global conflicts of Aliwal and Rorke's Drift

18 Battle of Blenheim
Discover this major battle of the War of the Spanish Succession

26 Battle of Culloden
When Jacobite forces were defeated by loyalist troops near Inverness

30 Battle of Plassey
The British East India Company versus the Nawab of Bengal

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The defence of Rorke's Drift, which took place during the Zulu War









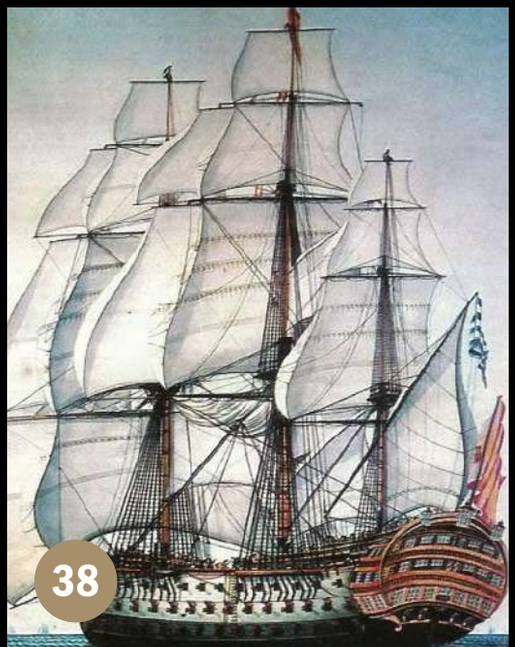

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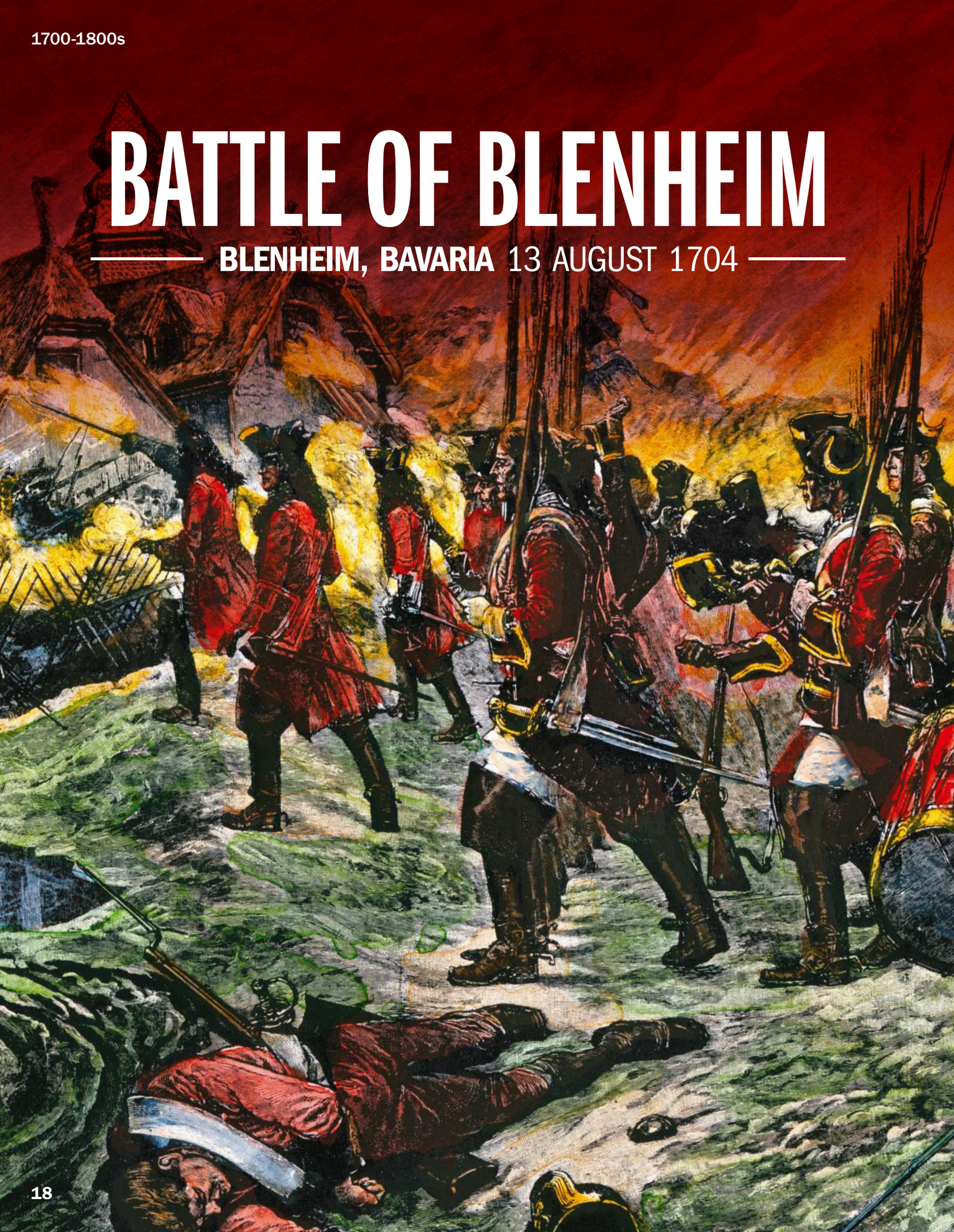

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BATTLE OF BLENHEIM

BLENHEIM, BAVARIA 13 AUGUST 1704





Lieutenant General Lord John Cutts' British infantry assaults the village of Blenheim at the start of the battle

The late summer sun beat down on the verdant fields on the left bank of the upper Danube, as long lines of scarlet-coated infantry advanced on the village of Blenheim. French soldiers peered from behind barricades as the enemy advanced determinedly towards their position. When the English came to within 30 yards, the French fired a deafening volley. Cries and groans went up in the English ranks as musket balls found their targets. Wounded and dying men dropped to the ground.

The French fired through holes in walls and from behind overturned carts. When the English reached the barricades, they delivered a crashing volley at point-blank range and then lunged at the enemy with bayonets. The French fired yet more volleys in response, and, finding themselves exposed to such brutal fire, the English drifted back down the slope to regroup. However, their valiant commander, Brigadier General Archibald Rowe, had been mortally wounded. His broken body now lay crumpled at the barricades, along with those who had tried, in vain, to reach him.

To the 2,800 men of Rowe's Brigade, it may have seemed like murder to march against such a well-fortified position. However, allied army commander John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, had crafted a cunning plan to deceive the French. He had no qualms sacrificing men when necessary, and the purpose of Rowe's attack was to bait the French into reinforcing Blenheim.

On the opposite end of the field, Prince Eugene of Savoy was launching a similar attack with his Imperial troops against the village of Lutzingen. As for the Franco-Bavarian army, its commander, Marshal Camille d'Hostun, duc de Tallard, had deliberately chosen to defend the line of a stream that separated the two armies. His army was spread out along a four-mile front on the Plain of Hochstadt. Tallard believed the flat ground behind the Nebel would give his French cavalrymen ample room to outmanoeuvre their counterparts. This clash of arms, on the hot afternoon of 13 August 1704, would be the turning point a multi-national dispute that would rage for over a decade.

History of aggression

When the sickly King Charles II of Spain died childless on 1 November 1700, he left his throne to French King Louis XIV's grandson, Duke Philip of Anjou. Although the French took steps to allay the fear of other European nations that the two crowns might unite at some future date, France's enemies grew suspicious of the French king's intentions, given his past aggressions. It did not help the matter that Louis XIV sent his troops into the Spanish Netherlands in February 1701, to seize the border forts that served as a buffer between the French and Dutch. This only served as proof that the acquisition of the Spanish throne was meant to help facilitate French expansion.

Accordingly, in 1701, England, the United Provinces, and the Holy Roman Empire revived the Grand Alliance against France. The ensuing 13-year conflict became known as the War of the Spanish Succession. When 52-year-old John Churchill, Earl of Marlborough, arrived in the United Provinces with 12,000 British troops

in June 1702, the allies took the offensive. Marlborough helped the Dutch recover some of the French-held fortresses, for which Queen Anne proclaimed him duke in December 1702.

Marlborough felt stifled fighting alongside the cautious Dutch, so in late 1703 he received approval to campaign in southern Germany. Bavaria had defected from the alliance that year and joined France. Fearing that a combined Franco-Bavarian army might topple the emperor's Imperial armies and capture Vienna, Marlborough planned to strike a pre-emptive blow against Bavaria.

On 19 May 1704, Marlborough led his 20,000-strong army south. He planned to join forces with Prince Eugene of Savoy's Imperial army operating along the Upper Rhine. Marlborough decided to cross the Danube at Donauworth, but the crossing was blocked by a Bavarian force entrenched on the Schellenberg Heights overlooking the town. Bavarian Elector Maximilian-Emanuel sent Marshal Count Jean Baptist d'Arco's 12,000-man army to obstruct Marlborough. The duke launched a frontal assault on 2 July that smashed through the Bavarian line in one location, forcing it to withdraw from its position.

In the face of Marlborough's invasion of Bavaria, all of the French and Bavarian forces in the duchy assembled in the fortified town of Augsburg in order to await further reinforcements from France. Tallard arrived in the town with substantial French reinforcements on 3 August. The 56,000-strong Franco-Bavarian army crossed to left bank of the Danube, threatening Marlborough's supply line. On 11 August, the duke and Prince Eugene joined forces.

Pinning the flanks

Marlborough dispatched a large body of cavalry to protect the allied army as it broke camp the following morning. This advance guard, which rode west in the early hours of 13 August, took up a blocking position in farm fields. The allies formed into nine columns, four of which belonged to Prince Eugene's 16,000-man right wing and five to Marlborough's 36,000-man left wing. Prince Eugene's wing departed first as it had a longer march. Marlborough intended to make strong attacks on the villages at either end of the enemy line.

To ensure that no more allied troops than necessary were funnelled into the attacks on Blenheim and Lutzingen, both commanders would have to lead from the front and closely monitor the diversionary attacks. These assaults were to be strong enough to compel the Franco-Bavarian army to commit its reserves to both flanks in the belief that the allies were attempting to turn one or both flanks. Since Marlborough's wing would deliver the main attack in the left-centre late in the day, he would have to make sure that Lieutenant General Lord John Cutts made a convincing attack on Blenheim.

OPPOSING FORCES

GRAND ALLIANCE	FRANCO-BAVARIAN ARMY
LEADERS	**LEADERS**
John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough & Eugene, Prince of Savoy	Marshal Camille d'Hostun, duc de Tallard; Ferdinand, comte de Marsin; Maximilian Emanuel II von Wittelsbach, Elector of Bavaria
INFANTRY	**INFANTRY**
67 battalions	89 battalions
CAVALRY	**CAVALRY**
181 squadrons	124 squadrons
GUNS	**GUNS**
66	90
TOTAL	**TOTAL**
52,000 men	56,000 men



*Prince Eugene of Savoy (**left**) and the Duke of Marlborough (**right**) were kindred spirits on the battlefield. Working in close co-operation they defeated a larger army at Blenheim*



The Duke of Marlborough's invasion of Bavaria in 1704 successfully countered the Franco-Bavarian offensive

The French observed the allied advance about 7am, but Tallard did not order the troops to be awakened for another hour. When he became convinced his enemy was preparing a major attack, he ordered the tents packed up and sent to the rear. By 10am, Marlborough's troops were deployed for battle, but Prince Eugene's men were still making their way toward their jump-off positions. Previously, at 8am, French artillery crews had begun shelling enemy formations, and Marlborough had his men lie down to reduce casualties. Tallard took command of the right wing opposite Marlborough. The Elector and French Marshal Count Ferdinand of Marsin commanded their left wing, opposite Prince Eugene.

At 9am, the three Franco-Bavarian commanders climbed to the belfry of the Blenheim church to observe the enemy deployment. A heated discussion ensued about how to defend the Nebel – the Elector and Marsin favoured deploying their troops directly behind the stream so that they could contest the allied crossing, thereby driving up enemy casualties. But Tallard, who was sceptical that the allies would send infantry across the Nebel, favoured placing his cavalry and infantry well back from the Nebel so that it could counterattack over dry ground any enemy force that managed to cross the stream. Tallard prevailed, although Marsin and the Elector intended to command their wing as they saw fit.

"IN THE FACE OF MARLBOROUGH'S INVASION OF BAVARIA, ALL OF THE FRENCH AND BAVARIAN FORCES IN THE DUCHY ASSEMBLED IN THE FORTIFIED TOWN OF AUGSBURG TO AWAIT FURTHER REINFORCEMENTS FROM FRANCE"

On the south side of the Nebel, where the Franco-Bavarian waited to receive the attack, there was a third village, Oberglau, which was closer to Lutzingen than it was to Blenheim. While the Elector took command of the Bavarians defending Lutzingen, Marsin positioned himself with the French defending Oberglau. The rest of the ground from Oberglau to Blenheim was Tallard's responsibility.

The shortest route of advance for the allied army was across the Nebel toward Blenheim. Lieutenant General Marquis Philippe de Clérambault, who commanded nine garrisoned infantry battalions inside Blenheim.

Behind the village were 18 more infantry battalions that constituted the right wing's infantry reserve. The only other infantry belonging to Tallard's wing were nine inexperienced infantry battalions, which were stationed behind his cavalry.

Marlborough's chief of artillery, Colonel Holcroft Blood, had his guns in position at 10am and they engaged the French artillery on the opposite side of the Nebel. Meanwhile, allied engineers began building five causeways that would be needed to move men and guns over the marsh on both sides of the river.

Shortly after 12pm, a mounted courier from Prince Eugene handed Marlborough a dispatch stating that most of Eugene's forces were in position and ready to attack. This was the news Marlborough had waited for all morning. He sent an order to Cutts instructing him to advance on Blenheim.

Rowe's Brigade, which had taken cover in a dip in the terrain 150 yards past the Nebel, had been pounded by a battery of 24-pounders near



Blenheim prevented the French from extending their influence across all of Europe

the village, and anything seemed better than staying in that spot. Cutts' infantry attacked two more times in the next two hours with the same results. Marlborough rode over to Cutts and told him to deploy his men 60 yards from the French barricades and make it appear as if they might attack again at any moment.

The tactic had the desired result, because by mid-afternoon Clérambault had ordered the reserve battalions to move into the village and into the cornfield on the west side of the village. This meant that 12,000 French infantry, which was the majority of Tallard's foot, was committed to the defence of Blenheim. It was exactly what Marlborough wanted.

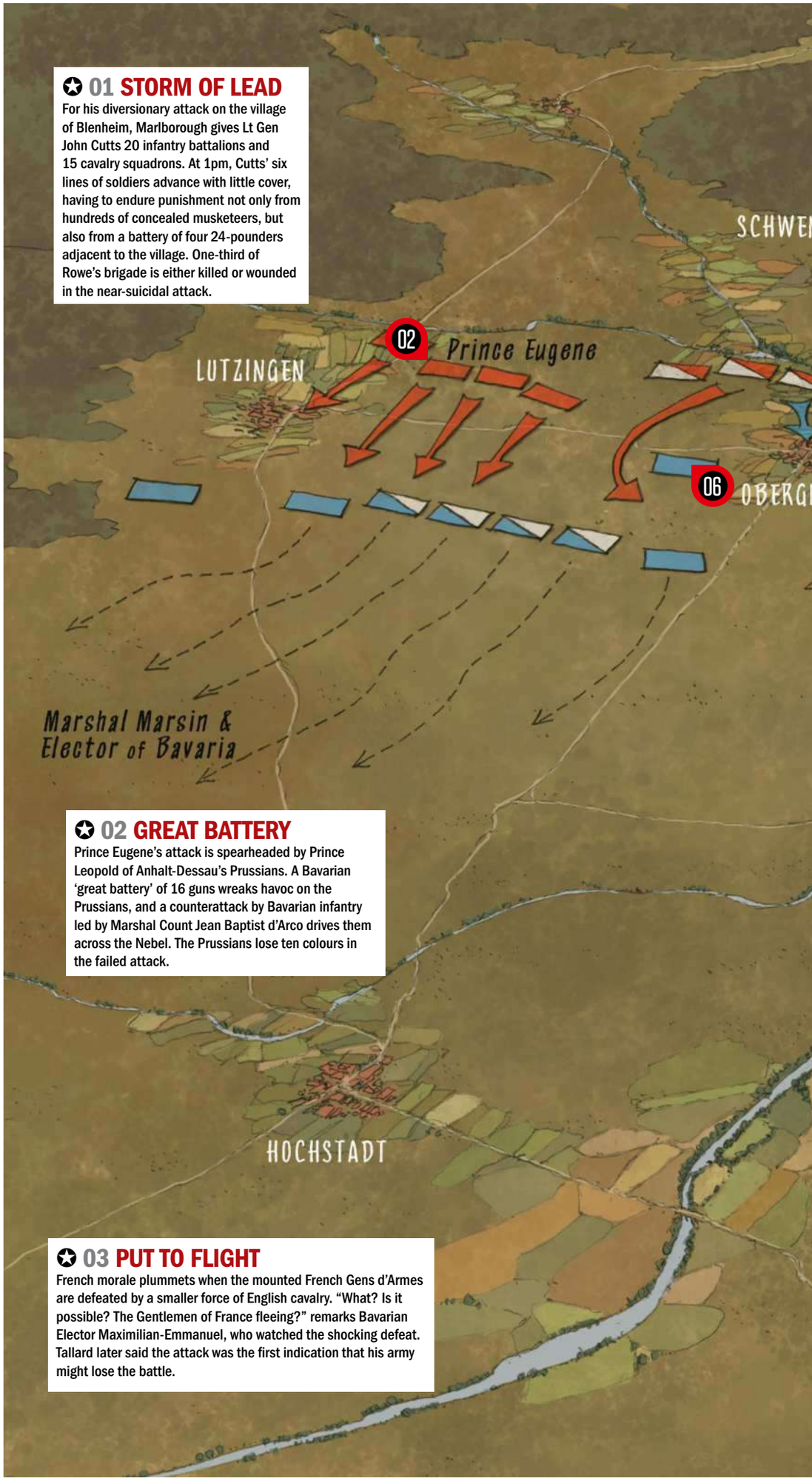
Bavarian payback

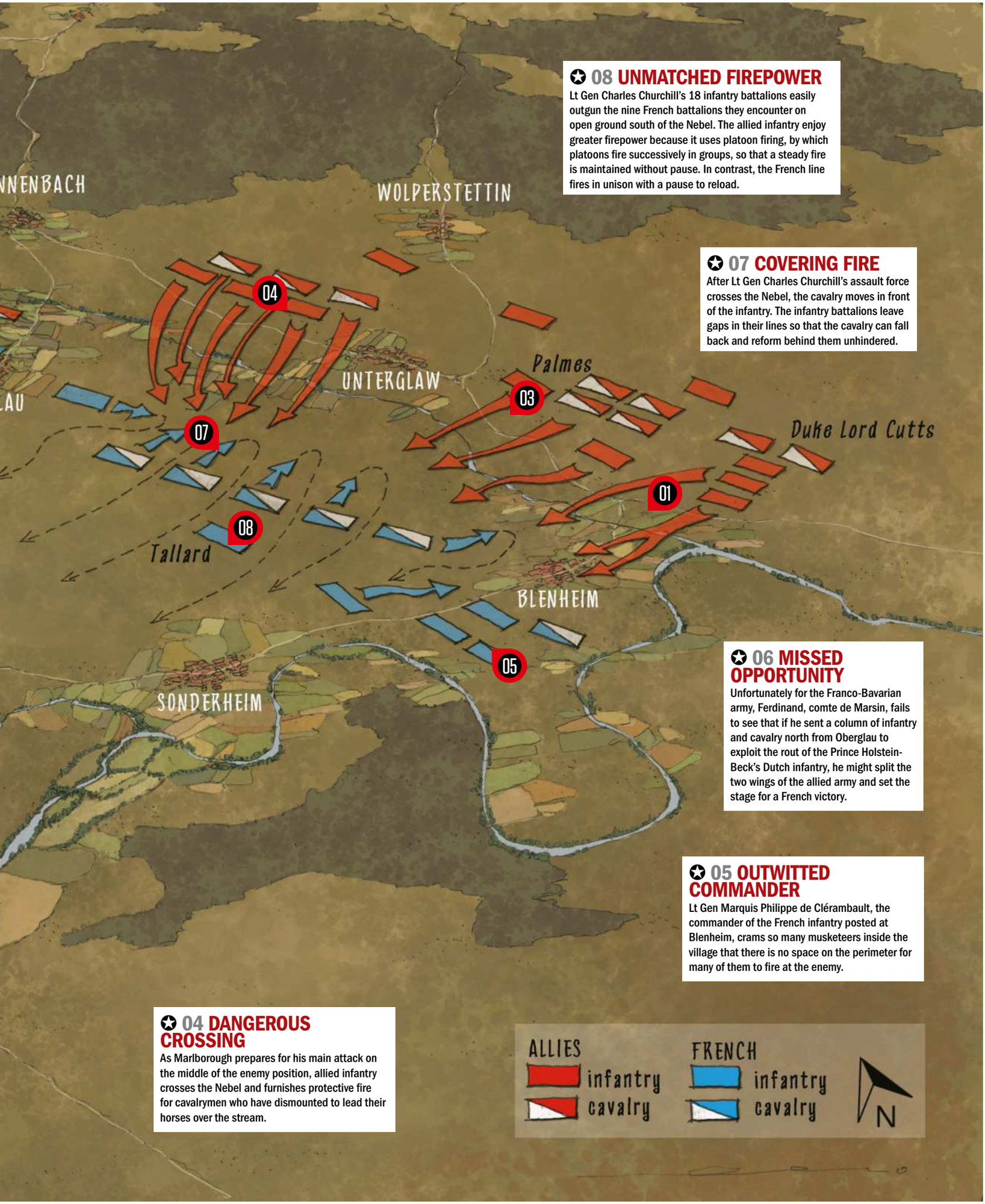
Prince Eugene's musketeers had a difficult time advancing across the broken ground near the Swabian Jura, where a number of mountain brooks fed the Nebel. The allied attack in that sector began when Field Marshal Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau led two brigades of hardy Prussians toward Lutzingen. They ran headlong into Bavarian infantry under D'Arco, who was anxious to settle a score against the allies for having been whipped at the Schellenberg. The Elector had massed his artillery at Lutzingen, and it did great damage to the Prussian lines. When Prince Eugene saw the Prussians flagging, he fed two brigades of Danish foot into the fight.

The advantage lay with the defenders, and a Bavarian counterattack scattered the Prussians. Indeed, the Prussians were so shaken they fled well beyond the point they had started their attack, but Prince Eugene rallied them. Most of his guns had deployed at Oberglau, and therefore his infantry advancing on Lutzingen lacked artillery support. By mid-afternoon Eugene had made no headway against the Bavarians.

Tallard's strength was that he had 64 squadrons of cavalry totalling approximately 8,000 troopers. The most dignified of these were eight squadrons of Gens d'Armes, which were the king's household cavalry. They had a long tradition of battlefield prowess, and their ranks contained many aristocrats. However, the French and English cavalry contingents fought differently. As a general rule, the French cavalry trotted halfway towards their target, halted to fire a volley, and then charged home with their swords. In blunt contrast, the English simply charged home with their swords, which enabled them to focus on manoeuvring to the best advantage during an attack. It soon became apparent which approach worked best.

During Cutts' attack on Blenheim, Lieutenant General Beat-Jacques, Comt de Zurlauben, had launched spoiling attacks with the French Gens d'Armes against Cutt's unprotected right flank. Cutts had requested assistance from one of Lieutenant General Henry Lumley's brigades stationed nearby, which was commanded by Colonel Francis Palmes. In response to Cutts' request, Palmes led his five squadrons of crack horse across the Nebel. Zurlauben immediately counterattacked with all eight of his Gens d'Armes squadrons. Zurlauben sought to envelop Palmes' shorter line, but Palmes perceived the threat and took action. He ordered the squadron on each flank to advance





✪ 08 UNMATCHED FIREPOWER

Lt Gen Charles Churchill's 18 infantry battalions easily outgun the nine French battalions they encounter on open ground south of the Nebel. The allied infantry enjoy greater firepower because it uses platoon firing, by which platoons fire successively in groups, so that a steady fire is maintained without pause. In contrast, the French line fires in unison with a pause to reload.

✪ 07 COVERING FIRE

After Lt Gen Charles Churchill's assault force crosses the Nebel, the cavalry moves in front of the infantry. The infantry battalions leave gaps in their lines so that the cavalry can fall back and reform behind them unhindered.

✪ 06 MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Unfortunately for the Franco-Bavarian army, Ferdinand, comte de Marsin, fails to see that if he sent a column of infantry and cavalry north from Oberglau to exploit the rout of the Prince Holstein-Beck's Dutch infantry, he might split the two wings of the allied army and set the stage for a French victory.

✪ 05 OUTWITTED COMMANDER

Lt Gen Marquis Philippe de Clérambault, the commander of the French infantry posted at Blenheim, crams so many musketeers inside the village that there is no space on the perimeter for many of them to fire at the enemy.

✪ 04 DANGEROUS CROSSING

As Marlborough prepares for his main attack on the middle of the enemy position, allied infantry crosses the Nebel and furnishes protective fire for cavalrymen who have dismounted to lead their horses over the stream.

© Rocio Espin

at an angle and then wheel to strike the French flank. The English cavalry executed the move with great skill. Outmanoeuvred, Zurlauben's troopers raced back to the protection of the main line with the English horsemen following closely on their heels.

Both sides had watched the clash of these elite cavalry squadrons with fascination. The outcome for the French was humiliating, and Tallard was deeply unnerved. In the long term, this event's effect on morale was far greater than its minor tactical significance.

Meanwhile, Marsin had deployed 16 battalions of French infantry in Oberglau. Lieutenant General Prince Karl Rudolf of Württemberg-Neuenstadt led two brigades of Danish cavalry forward in the early afternoon in a half-hearted attack on the village.

As the afternoon wore on, Marlborough feared that the strong French position at Oberglau might endanger the right flank of his attack on the centre, so he ordered an infantry attack on the fortified village. At 4pm, Lieutenant General Horn of Marlborough's wing ordered Major General Anton Günther Fürst von Holstein-Beck to lead a division of Dutch foot against Oberglau.

***Below:** John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, is shown in a Victory Tapestry at Blenheim Palace. Marlborough led from the front, issuing orders throughout the day to counter enemy moves that threatened to derail his brilliant battle plan*

"IT WAS AT THIS STAGE THAT MARLBOROUGH READIED THE HAMMER BLOW HE WAS PLANNING TO DELIVER TO THE FRENCH ARMY"

The French infantry at Oberglau repulsed the attack, so Marsin ordered one of the four brigades to launch a counterattack. In compliance with these orders, Charles O'Brien, 5th Viscount Clare, led his 1,500-strong Catholic Irish émigrés clad in bright red jackets against Holstein-Beck's wavering infantry. The Irishmen's savage volleys overwhelmed the Dutch attack.

Holstein-Beck cast about for assistance. Seeing 1,000 Imperial cuirassiers sitting idly nearby, he begged their commander, Major General Graf von Fugger, to drive off the Irish. But Fugger's armoured cavalry belonged to Prince Eugene's wing. Fugger said he would only do so if ordered by Prince Eugene. Shortly afterwards, Holstein-Beck was gravely wounded. Marlborough, who seemed to be everywhere at once on his white horse, realised that the right centre was dangerously exposed, and sent a message to Eugene requesting reinforcements. Eugene gave Marlborough control of Fugger's Brigade, and the duke ordered the cavalry commander to counterattack Marsin's horse. Fugger's cuirassiers gave them cold steel and drove them back.

Marlborough next sent Hanoverian and Hessian regiments to take up a blocking position so that the French at Oberglau could not disrupt his pending attack. The duke also ordered his artillery chief to redirect his guns against Oberglau.

Massing forces

It was at this stage that Marlborough readied the hammer blow he was planning to deliver to the French army. In total, he planned to send 22,000 men (14,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry) against the enemy centre. Lieutenant General Charles Marlborough, the duke's younger brother, would lead the attack, with the men formed in four lines, two of cavalry and two of infantry.

Seven battalions of allied infantry crossed the Nebel at 3pm and formed into a line of battle to cover the crossing of the rest of the assault force. Using the platoon firing system, they shattered Zurlauben's piecemeal cavalry attacks. Once Lieutenant General Churchill's entire force was safely across the Nebel around 4pm, the two lines of cavalry rode through the gaps in the first rank of infantry and reformed. To bolster the allied





Images: Alamy, Corbis, Thinkstock

***Above:** A French trooper fires his carbine at a British trooper during a cavalry mêlée at Blenheim*

"WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE ONCE IMPRESSIVE FRANCO-BAVARIAN ARMY WAS NOT ENOUGH TO THREATEN VIENNA"

centre, Blood sent nine field guns across the Nebel.

Zurlauben next deployed all available cavalry against Churchill's much larger force. Despite a valiant effort, the French squadrons could accomplish nothing more than forcing the allied cavalry to temporarily withdraw. During a clash with Lieutenant General Cuno Josua von Bülow's Hanoverian horse, Zurlauben was severely wounded.

Zurlauben was replaced by the Marquis de Humières, but this time the situation was growing desperate for Tallard's wing. By 5.30pm, the nine allied cavalry brigades participating in the main attack on the French centre finally succeeded in driving de Humières' cavalry from the field. Realising his wing was crumbling, Tallard ordered his nine green infantry battalions to hold the low ridge south of the Nebel at all costs.

To their credit, the raw French foot, all of whom had been recruited at the outset of the war, made a good show of themselves. Unfortunately, they were heavily outgunned. The withering fire of Churchill's platoons, aided by Blood's field guns firing canister, opened gaps in the French squares, and the allied horse finished off those not killed by musket or artillery fire.

Once all resistance, save the French infantry within the confines of the village of Blenheim, had been crushed on Tallard's right wing, Churchill ordered one of his cavalry divisions to wheel right and attack the enemy's left wing. He subsequently ordered another mounted division to wheel left and pursue de Humières' cavalry through the marshes along the Danube.

A Hessian squadron found Tallard near the Danube and took him to Marlborough. Upwards of 3,000 French cavalrymen died trying to swim the river.

With Tallard's cavalry driven from the field, Marlborough's infantry was able to complete the encirclement of Clérambault's beleaguered garrison inside Blenheim. To compel the pocket of French infantry to surrender, Blood turned his guns on the village. When the losses were tallied, the French had suffered 20,000 killed and wounded and 14,000 men captured. As for the allies, they lost 6,000 killed and 8,000 wounded. In the wake of the battle, as many as half of the survivors of the Franco-Bavarian army deserted.

What was left of the once impressive Franco-Bavarian army was not enough to threaten Vienna. Marlborough had won a brilliant victory that would be remembered as one of the most decisive battles of modern history.



***Right:** This memorial to the battle is located in Lutzingen, Germany. It stands at the view point the French convoy would have occupied*



✪ HIGHLAND CHARGE

In the shock tactic of the Jacobite army, the men would throw themselves at the enemy at top speed, brandishing broadswords, shields, pistols and daggers while screaming a war cry. It was intended to intimidate the enemy and get Jacobites into close quarters, where their ferocity could be unleashed.

✪ CLOSE ORDER

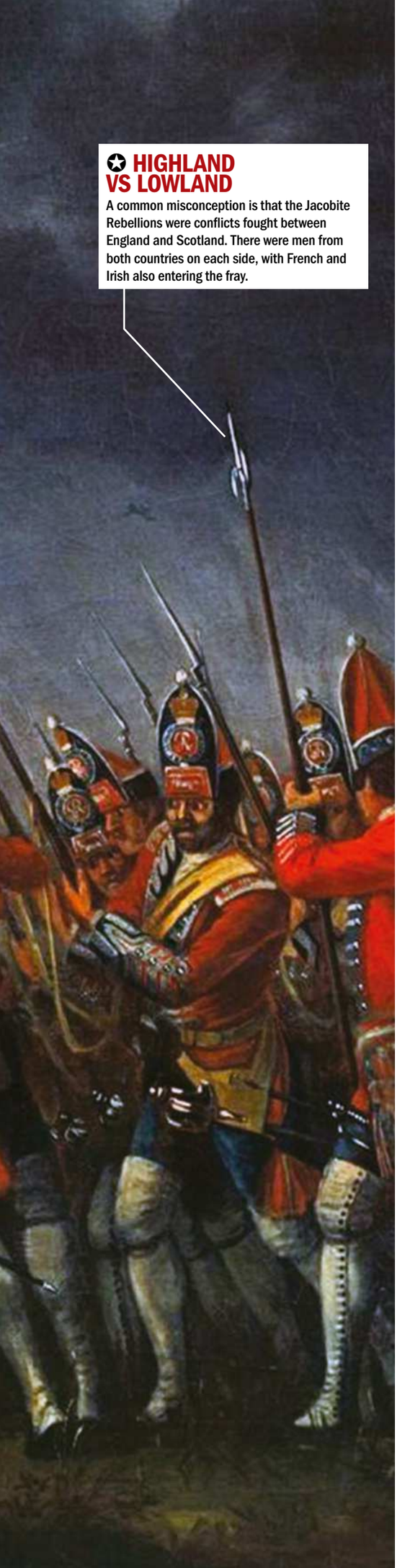
In anticipation of the dreaded Highland Charge, Cumberland had drilled his men to combat it. They were instructed to hold their fire until the Jacobites were within effective firing range, fire one volley, and then bayonet the man to the right thereby catching the enemy under their lifted sword arm and bypassing their shield.

✪ END OF AN ERA

A Jacobite was someone who supported King James VII (of Scotland) and II (of England) and his descendants from the House of Stuart in their claims to the British throne. The word comes from Jacobus, which is Latin for James – therefore, Jacobite means follower of James.

✪ TARTAN

Contrary to popular belief, none of the clans at Culloden wore specific clan tartan. This did not begin until George IV's visit to Scotland in 1822 and the revival of Highland culture. The tartan that was worn would have been differentiated by region, with local materials deciding the colours that were used.



✪ HIGHLAND VS LOWLAND

A common misconception is that the Jacobite Rebellions were conflicts fought between England and Scotland. There were men from both countries on each side, with French and Irish also entering the fray.

BATTLE OF CULLODEN

— INVERNESS, NORTHERN SCOTLAND —

16 APRIL 1746

There were three notable attempts by the descendants of King James VII and II to reclaim the throne of Scotland and England, and they are known as the Jacobite Rebellions. The final attempt was made by the exiled Charles Edward Stuart, better known as the 'Young Pretender' or 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'. With the Austrian Wars of Succession raging in Europe, the Bonnie Prince, the exiled grandson of James VII, saw his opportunity and sailed for Scotland intent on reclaiming what he saw as his birthright. Landing in the Highlands of Scotland with only a handful of men, Charles used the promise of French aid and his own charm to win the nobility of Scotland round to his cause. The Bonnie Prince's standard was raised at Glenfinnan on 19 August 1745; the rebellion against the Hanoverian king George II had begun.

Moving quickly, the Young Pretender soon delivered Edinburgh into Jacobite hands, and would score a decisive defeat over the royal army at the Battle of Prestonpans. Everything was looking up for the young prince as his army marched into England. He hoped that a quick victory would gain him support from the English Jacobites as the majority of the government army were fighting on the continent. They penetrated deep into England and by December had reached Derby, only 125 miles from London. However, lack of support from English Jacobites and pressure from the Duke of Cumberland's force meant that the Bonnie Prince had to withdraw north for fear of losing his army.

On returning to Scotland, the Jacobites again vanquished the government forces at Falkirk on 17 January 1746. Due to the confusion that followed, however, the Jacobites were not able to capitalise on their victory and the decision was made to withdraw further north. There they would gather their strength over the winter months and the Jacobite campaign would start again in the spring. Hearing of the government's defeat at Falkirk, Cumberland, who had recently returned from campaigning in Europe, raced north to take command of the royal army. The Jacobites' campaign in Scotland had left their forces stretched thin, so when the Bonnie Prince decided to meet Cumberland for the battle, a move that his advisers warned against, he was not in the strongest position he could have been.

The two forces met at Culloden Moor, near to Nairn and Inverness, where the boggy ground was unfavourable to the Jacobites who relied on a fierce charge to break their enemies. Cumberland had the advantage in artillery and had drilled his men to face the charge of the Jacobites. It was these, and other factors, that led to the Hanoverian forces completely routing the Jacobites on the field.

After the battle was over, the government forces harried the Jacobites mercilessly across the country. Because of the atrocities that were committed on his orders, the Duke of Cumberland earned himself the name 'Butcher'. Bonnie Prince Charlie, dejected and defeated, would eventually be smuggled out of Scotland to France. While escaping, he sailed to Skye and inspired the popular folk song The Skye Boat Song. Europe would be both the prince's and his cause's final resting place; there would never be another Stuart attempt on the throne.

Jacobites

TROOPS 7,000



Prince Charles Edward Stuart

LEADER

Grandson to the exiled king James II, the young prince hoped to win the throne back from George II.
STRENGTHS Personal charm and a strong claim to the throne.
WEAKNESS Poor decisions ultimately led to his defeat.



Highlander

UNIT

With experience in the military and skirmishes with neighbouring clans, these men were very tough warriors.
STRENGTH The devastating Highland Charge.
WEAKNESS Hot headed and not always willing to follow orders.



Broadsword

KEY WEAPON

Although not carried by all Jacobites, the broadsword was lethal in close combat.
STRENGTHS Brutal and deadly in close quarters.
WEAKNESS Its extremely limited range made the wielder vulnerable to musket and cannon fire.

✪ 01 TIME TO ENGAGE

With the campaign stretching its forces out across the Highlands, the Jacobite army does not meet the government troops with its full strength. Despite being urged by his advisers to retreat, the Bonnie Prince disregards their advice and pushes on to engage Cumberland's forces on unsuitable ground. With his weaker position, Charles would need to plan well if he had any chance of victory.

✪ 02 IN THE BLACK OF NIGHT

Eager to catch the enemy forces flatfooted, the Jacobites plan a bold night raid on the Hanoverian camp. In the pitch black, the two columns that had been dispatched get separated and many men become lost in the rough terrain. Fearing the element of surprise has passed, the officers call the attack off, leaving the deflated, tired and hungry Jacobites to trudge back to their lines.

✪ 03 BATTLE LINES DRAWN

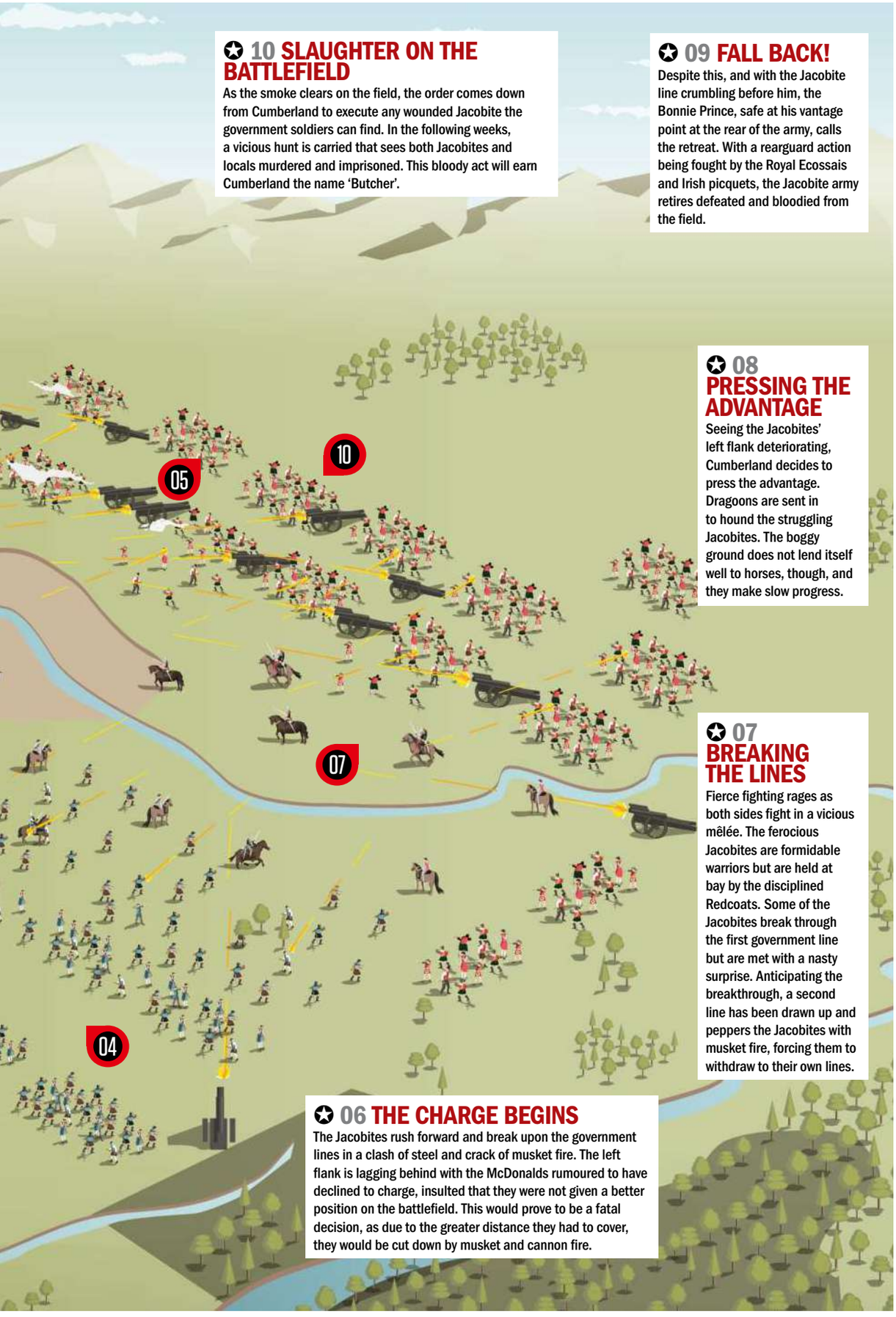
Exhausted from the botched raid, the Jacobites line up against the fresh and ready Hanoverians. The government forces are in high spirits having celebrated the duke's 25th birthday.

✪ 04 CRACKS BEGIN TO SHOW

The right wing of the Jacobite army skirts a swamp that is blocking its path and attempts to move into a more favourable position without express orders. This disrupts the entire line and leads to large gaps opening in the Jacobite army, leaving it exposed to enemy fire.

✪ 05 CANNONS BLAZE

The Duke of Cumberland orders his superior artillery to open fire. Waiting for the Hanoverians to advance, Bonnie Prince Charlie lets his forces wither under the fire for 30 minutes. While the marshy terrain keeps casualties to a minimum, the fire begins to take a toll on the Jacobites' morale. The Highland chiefs, furious at this inaction, press for a charge and the ability to take the fight to the enemy.



✪ 10 SLAUGHTER ON THE BATTLEFIELD

As the smoke clears on the field, the order comes down from Cumberland to execute any wounded Jacobite the government soldiers can find. In the following weeks, a vicious hunt is carried that sees both Jacobites and locals murdered and imprisoned. This bloody act will earn Cumberland the name 'Butcher'.

✪ 09 FALL BACK!

Despite this, and with the Jacobite line crumbling before him, the Bonnie Prince, safe at his vantage point at the rear of the army, calls the retreat. With a rearguard action being fought by the Royal Ecossais and Irish picquets, the Jacobite army retires defeated and bloodied from the field.

✪ 08 PRESSING THE ADVANTAGE

Seeing the Jacobites' left flank deteriorating, Cumberland decides to press the advantage. Dragoons are sent in to hound the struggling Jacobites. The boggy ground does not lend itself well to horses, though, and they make slow progress.

✪ 07 BREAKING THE LINES

Fierce fighting rages as both sides fight in a vicious mêlée. The ferocious Jacobites are formidable warriors but are held at bay by the disciplined Redcoats. Some of the Jacobites break through the first government line but are met with a nasty surprise. Anticipating the breakthrough, a second line has been drawn up and peppers the Jacobites with musket fire, forcing them to withdraw to their own lines.

✪ 06 THE CHARGE BEGINS

The Jacobites rush forward and break upon the government lines in a clash of steel and crack of musket fire. The left flank is lagging behind with the McDonalds rumoured to have declined to charge, insulted that they were not given a better position on the battlefield. This would prove to be a fatal decision, as due to the greater distance they had to cover, they would be cut down by musket and cannon fire.

Hanoverians

TROOPS 8,000



Duke of Cumberland

LEADER

Son of the monarch George II, the duke was eager to prove himself on the battlefield.
STRENGTH Strict discipline ensured his men followed orders.
WEAKNESS His merciless treatment of wounded men earned him enmity in both Scotland and England.



Redcoat

UNIT

Trained to fight as a cohesive unit, the men of the king's regiments were ready to repel the Jacobite rebels.
STRENGTH Rigid training ensured they fought as a cohesive unit.
WEAKNESS Lacking the individual prowess of a Highland warrior.

Musket

KEY WEAPON

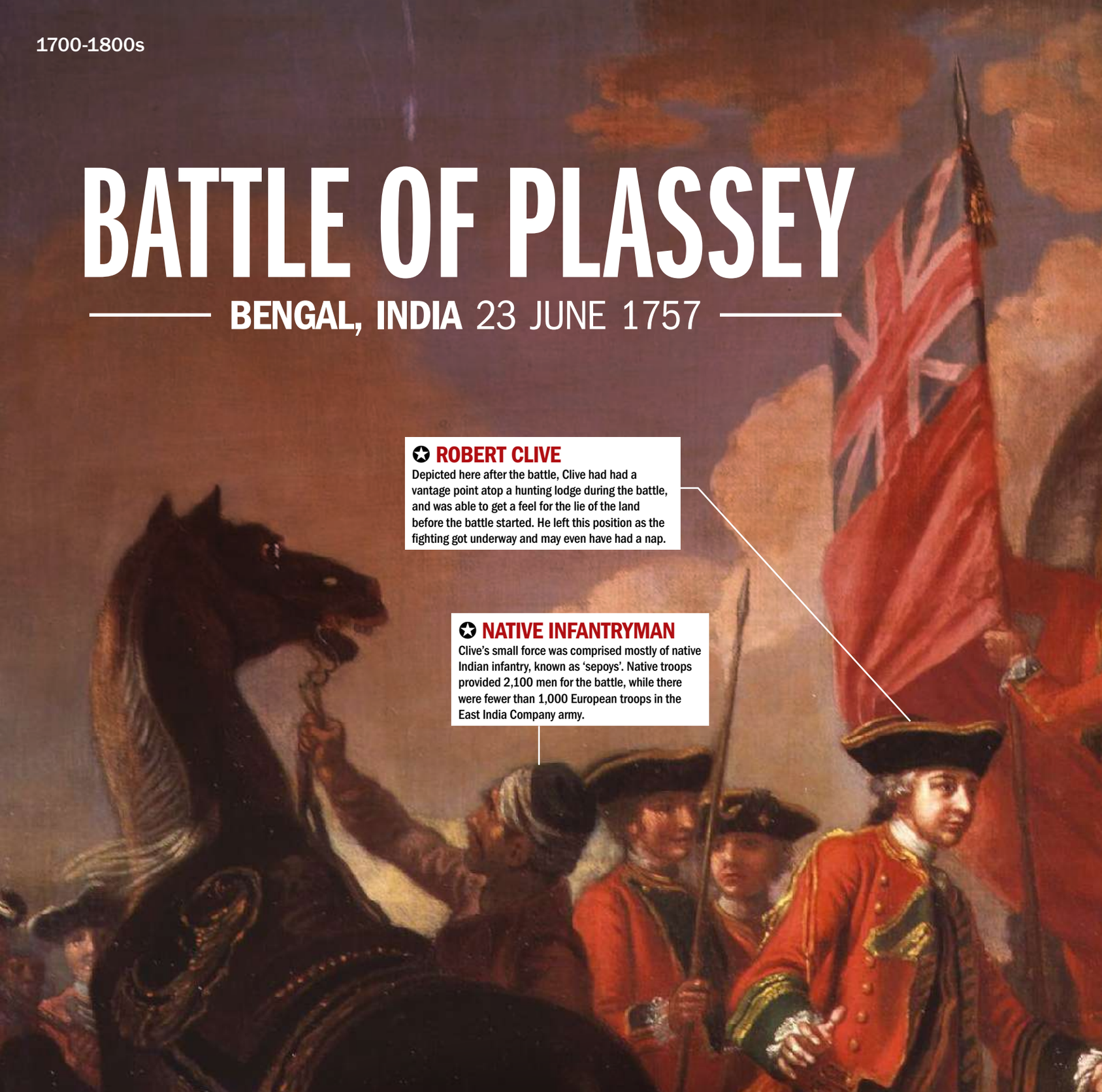
Able to fire three rounds a minute and coming with an attachable bayonet, the musket was a versatile weapon on the battlefield.
STRENGTH Massed fire could prove deadly to advancing infantry.
WEAKNESS Its bulky nature made it less effective in close quarters.



© Alamy, Edward Crooks

BATTLE OF PLASSEY

BENGAL, INDIA 23 JUNE 1757



ROBERT CLIVE
Depicted here after the battle, Clive had had a vantage point atop a hunting lodge during the battle, and was able to get a feel for the lie of the land before the battle started. He left this position as the fighting got underway and may even have had a nap.

NATIVE INFANTRYMAN
Clive's small force was comprised mostly of native Indian infantry, known as 'sepoys'. Native troops provided 2,100 men for the battle, while there were fewer than 1,000 European troops in the East India Company army.

Trouble started to brew as soon as the young Siraj-ud-Daulah took over as Nawab of Bengal from his grandfather, Alivardi Khan, in 1756. Siraj recognised the growing influence of the European elements in his country and was wary of his own people, suspecting factions wanting to overthrow him. Tensions were raised as Siraj occupied Calcutta on 16 June. An undetermined number of people died in the infamous 'black hole of Calcutta' incident, where prisoners were confined in a small room with inadequate ventilation. Robert Clive was given command of a small force tasked with liberating Calcutta, which was accomplished in December of that year. Siraj, however, had provoked the ire of the East India Company, and a punitive expedition was organised against the town of Hooghly.

Clive was also negotiating with several key figures (in particular the commander-in-chief of Siraj's army, Mir Jafar), who were engaged in a conspiracy against the Nawab. By 12 June 1757, Clive had Jafar in his back pocket and felt confident enough to march out to the Nawab's camp at Plassey.

Dark clouds filled the sky on the morning of 23 June, as the Nawab's massive army converged on Clive's small force, ensconced in a mango grove. Around 35,000 infantry, with 15,000 cavalry and 54 guns, was a formidable opponent for Clive's force of around 3,000 men and just 10 guns. Clive saw little hope of anything other than holding out and making an escape under cover of darkness. He even considered making a hasty peace with the Nawab, but fighting broke out and scotched that possibility.

Seeing no alternative, Clive moved his men out of the mango grove and formed a slender line to oppose the Nawab's army. An artillery duel followed, which forced Clive to withdraw his men after half an hour, having taken around



MIR JAFAR

Mir Jafar, commander-in-chief of Siraj's army, requested that Lord Clive met with him immediately after the Battle of Plassey. On meeting, Clive embraced him and saluted him as the Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Odisha.

30 casualties. Back in the mango grove his men were safer, and the battle turned around midday, when the black clouds that had menaced all morning finally decided to make a contribution. A severe rainstorm followed, and while the British gunners covered their powder with tarpaulins to keep it dry, the Nawab's artillerymen were less careful and their powder was drenched.

As soon as the downpour ended, and believing the British guns to be out of action, one of the Nawab's few loyal commanders, Mir Madan, launched a cavalry charge. The charge foundered in the face of British artillery fire and Mir Madan was fatally wounded. While men under the loyal Bedahur Al Khan and Mohan Lal continued to fight, the bulk of the Nawab's army sat on its heels and did nothing. Siraj, urged to withdraw by the traitors in his army, took to his camel and rode away, with his 2,000-strong bodyguard.

The Nawab's army (aside from Mir Jafar's force, which moved closer to the British) began to withdraw, leaving the French-manned guns exposed to attack. The French attempted to rally loyal elements of the Indian army, but despite sporadic resistance, the battle was already lost. At 5pm, Clive's men occupied the enemy camp. Mir Jafar took over as Nawab, but the East India Company was now in charge of the region.



The British East India Company

TROOPS 3,210

CAVALRY 0

CANNONS 10



Robert Clive

LEADER

Having first gone to India as a clerk, Clive brought much of Bengal under British rule.

STRENGTH Boldness in the face of often fearful odds.

WEAKNESS A victim of severe mood swings (he eventually committed suicide).



British artilleryman

KEY UNIT

The British gun crews were able to fire more rapidly than their opponents, and kept their powder dry during the rainstorm.

STRENGTH Discipline and proficiency with their guns.

WEAKNESS Seriously outnumbered by their opponents.



Six-pounder field piece

KEY WEAPON

Though only eight cannon and two howitzers were available, they outperformed numerous and bigger Indian guns.

STRENGTHS Quick to reload and easy to manoeuvre thanks to small size.

WEAKNESS Only 10 total guns took part in the battle.



✪ 01 THE ARMIES FORM UP

Robert Clive, from his vantage point on the top of a hunting lodge, watches the Indian army lining up in a great crescent, pinning his small force against the river.

✪ 02 THE FRENCH TAKE POSITION

A number of small guns, manned by French personnel (some sources suggest they were actually sailors rather than trained artillerymen), moves to within half a mile of the mango grove.

✪ 03 LEAVING THE MANGO GROVE

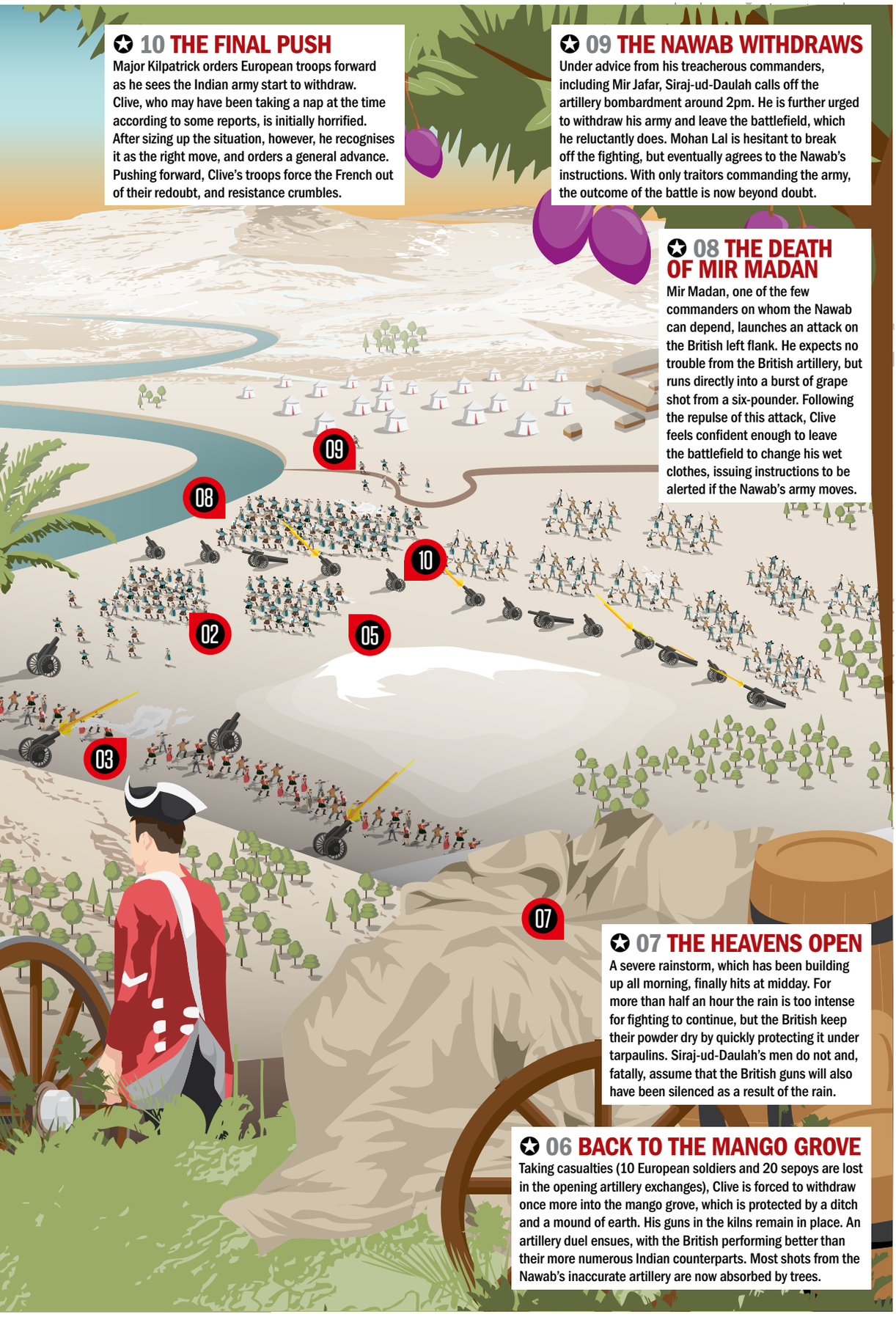
Despite being greatly outnumbered (and uncertain whether Mir Jafar will honour his promise to defect) Clive nevertheless resolves to put on a brave face and advance out of the protective confines of the mango grove. He orders his men to form a thin, slightly curved line, stretching out from the hunting lodge.

✪ 04 CLIVE COUNTERS THE FRENCH

At the same time, British artillery (two six-pounders and a pair of howitzers) is moved around 182 metres forward on the left flank, taking up position among a group of brick kilns, specifically to answer the fire of the French-manned guns. The rest of the artillery (six field pieces) is arranged in two groups of three, on either side of the European troops in the centre of the line.

✪ 05 THE BATTLE BEGINS

At 8am, the French-manned artillery open the battle, and their first shots kill a British soldier as well as wounding another. The rest of the Indian artillery follows suit, but most of their shots fly over their targets. British guns reply, but make no impression on the Nawab's army.



✪ 10 THE FINAL PUSH

Major Kilpatrick orders European troops forward as he sees the Indian army start to withdraw. Clive, who may have been taking a nap at the time according to some reports, is initially horrified. After sizing up the situation, however, he recognises it as the right move, and orders a general advance. Pushing forward, Clive's troops force the French out of their redoubt, and resistance crumbles.

✪ 09 THE NAWAB WITHDRAWS

Under advice from his treacherous commanders, including Mir Jafar, Siraj-ud-Daulah calls off the artillery bombardment around 2pm. He is further urged to withdraw his army and leave the battlefield, which he reluctantly does. Mohan Lal is hesitant to break off the fighting, but eventually agrees to the Nawab's instructions. With only traitors commanding the army, the outcome of the battle is now beyond doubt.

✪ 08 THE DEATH OF MIR MADAN

Mir Madan, one of the few commanders on whom the Nawab can depend, launches an attack on the British left flank. He expects no trouble from the British artillery, but runs directly into a burst of grape shot from a six-pounder. Following the repulse of this attack, Clive feels confident enough to leave the battlefield to change his wet clothes, issuing instructions to be alerted if the Nawab's army moves.

✪ 07 THE HEAVENS OPEN

A severe rainstorm, which has been building up all morning, finally hits at midday. For more than half an hour the rain is too intense for fighting to continue, but the British keep their powder dry by quickly protecting it under tarpaulins. Siraj-ud-Daulah's men do not and, fatally, assume that the British guns will also have been silenced as a result of the rain.

✪ 06 BACK TO THE MANGO GROVE

Taking casualties (10 European soldiers and 20 sepoys are lost in the opening artillery exchanges), Clive is forced to withdraw once more into the mango grove, which is protected by a ditch and a mound of earth. His guns in the kilns remain in place. An artillery duel ensues, with the British performing better than their more numerous Indian counterparts. Most shots from the Nawab's inaccurate artillery are now absorbed by trees.

The Nawab of Bengal

TROOPS 35,000

CAVALRY 15,000

CANNONS 54



Siraj-ud-Daulah

LEADER

Became Nawab of Bengal at 23 and immediately pitted himself against the expanding British influence in the region.

STRENGTH A numerically superior army to take on the British East India Company.

WEAKNESS Traitors, including his commander-in-chief.



Bengali infantry

KEY UNIT

The inferior armament of the Nawab's infantry was partially made up for by its vast numbers.

STRENGTH Outnumbered Clive's force by 10-1.

WEAKNESS Weapons – they were mostly armed with primitive swords, bows and spears.



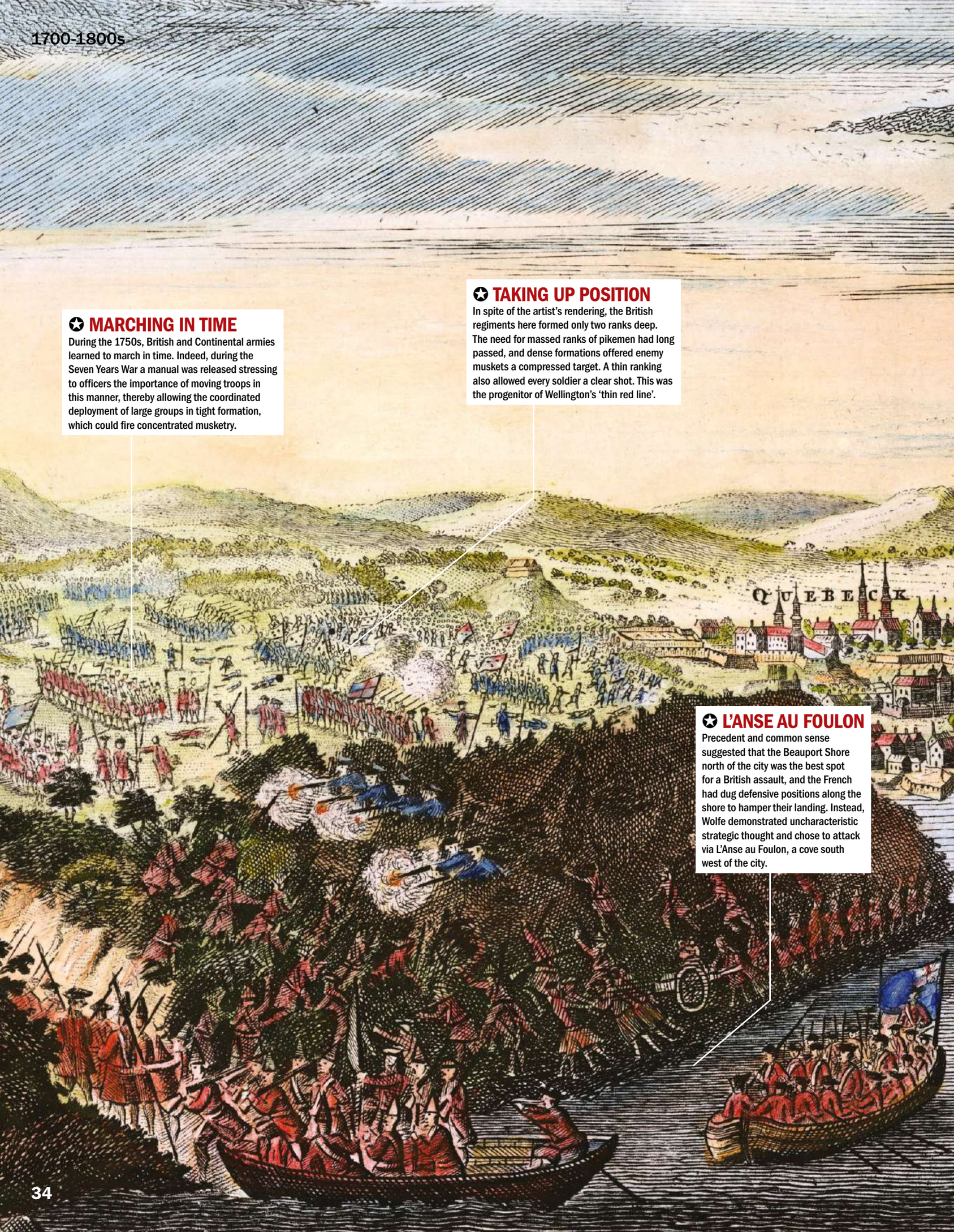
Bengali artillery

KEY WEAPON

Though present in great numbers, the Nawab's artillery was made up mostly of siege guns, unsuited to service in-field.

STRENGTHS Numerous and powerful, mostly 24- and 32-pounders.

WEAKNESS Difficult to move and slow to reload.



✪ MARCHING IN TIME

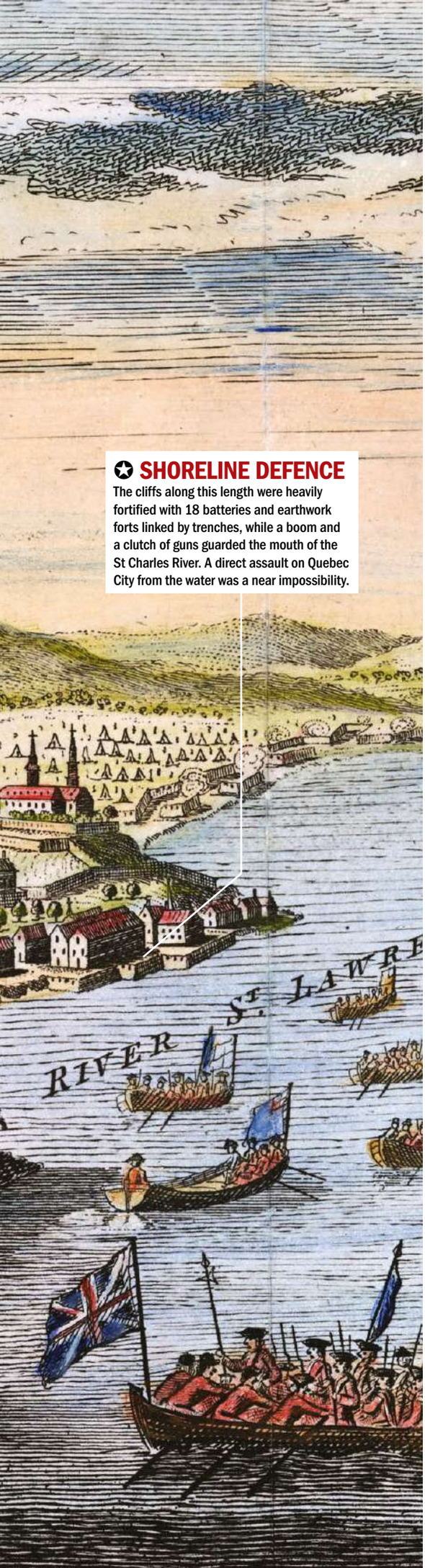
During the 1750s, British and Continental armies learned to march in time. Indeed, during the Seven Years War a manual was released stressing to officers the importance of moving troops in this manner, thereby allowing the coordinated deployment of large groups in tight formation, which could fire concentrated musketry.

✪ TAKING UP POSITION

In spite of the artist's rendering, the British regiments here formed only two ranks deep. The need for massed ranks of pikemen had long passed, and dense formations offered enemy muskets a compressed target. A thin ranking also allowed every soldier a clear shot. This was the progenitor of Wellington's 'thin red line'.

✪ L'ANSE AU FOULON

Precedent and common sense suggested that the Beauport Shore north of the city was the best spot for a British assault, and the French had dug defensive positions along the shore to hamper their landing. Instead, Wolfe demonstrated uncharacteristic strategic thought and chose to attack via L'Anse au Foulon, a cove south west of the city.



SHORELINE DEFENCE
The cliffs along this length were heavily fortified with 18 batteries and earthwork forts linked by trenches, while a boom and a clutch of guns guarded the mouth of the St Charles River. A direct assault on Quebec City from the water was a near impossibility.

BATTLE OF QUEBEC

QUEBEC CITY/THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM 13 SEPTEMBER 1759

The complex sprawl of the Seven Years War, which engaged every European superpower with the exception of the Ottoman Empire, raged fiercely between the bracketing years of 1756-1763. It spanned five continents and, by its conclusion, had shifted the power balance in Europe – British hegemony replacing French. It also laid the foundations for a new world Empire that would blossom in the century following and continue to hold sway until the great wars of the 20th century.

In the Americas, the conflict began as a boundary dispute between Britain's American colonists and their French neighbours in Canada and Louisiana. In April 1755, British regulars were dispatched to help the Americans in their struggle. The French followed suit and the dispute quickly erupted into a full-scale conflict. The fighting was absolutely savage; there were many battles, numerous horrific atrocities, and much blood was shed.

The pivotal moment, however, unfolded on the morning of 13 September 1759, when British forces under the command of Major General James Wolfe faced the French under Louis-Joseph de Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham to the west of Quebec City, the French capital in North America.

The British siege of Quebec had spanned three full months, although the decisive action passed in just one hour. The key decision was Wolfe's choice of landing site, the cove at Foulon. Such had been Wolfe's irresolution in the previous months he had quite befuddled the French who would not have suspected such sound thinking. There were a number of French sentries posted along Wolfe's approach, but they were expecting a flotilla of supplies and, under cover of night, mistook the approaching British for friends, the redoubtable Captain MacDonald duping them by calling out in their native tongue.

Error played yet a further role in the British success when the vanguard – light infantry under Lieutenant Colonel Howe – overshot their landing site and were forced to climb a steep precipice in order to secure the road up to the plains. Though a perilous manoeuvre, it paid off when Howe's men emerged behind the French defenders and MacDonald, who arrived first, once again deceived the sentries with his perfect French.

The deception did not last, and a French gun battery overlooking the Foulon opened fire on the British disembarking down below. Howe's men moved against them. With the road up to the plains now under his control, Wolfe moved his men up towards Quebec City.

When Montcalm arrived on the battlefield, meanwhile, he ordered his men into speedy formation and attacked with alacrity before any more British troops could arrive. His haste was misplaced, especially when pitted against his enemy's superior tactical doctrine. For while the French preferred to move swiftly in column, firing at will before enjoining their foe with bayonets drawn, the British appreciated the efficacy of co-ordinated musket fire en masse with the enemy in close range.

Here, the superior French numbers when moved in column against the British – whose central units loaded their muskets with double balls – counted for nothing. Setting a precedent for the years to come, the English thin red line routed massed French columns.

Neither Wolfe nor Montcalm survived the battle, though the former's tactical nous – coming to the fore again when Howe's light infantry, ordered to protect the rear, fought off Colonel Bourgainville's cavalry – won the day.

With Quebec's surrender a few days later, on 18 September, Britain had won the war in North America. Hostilities continued but Quebec remained in British hands and Canada's destiny was all set.

© Alamy

British Army at Quebec

BAYONETS 1,768

MILITIA 0

CANNONS 2



Major General James Wolfe

LEADER

From a family with a fine military tradition, Wolfe rose through the ranks and commanded the British forces at 32 years old.

STRENGTHS His tactical know-how and choice of landing site won the battle for Quebec.

WEAKNESSES His procrastination lengthened the siege, and his own bravery cost him his life.



Light Infantry of the line

KEY UNIT

Lieutenant Colonel Howe's light infantry played a key role, securing the road to the plains and later fighting off the French cavalry from Cap Rouge.

STRENGTHS More mobile & lightly equipped than other infantry.

WEAKNESS Showed no flaws in this battle.



Brown Bess musket

KEY WEAPON

The standard flintlock musket of the British Army, the Brown Bess was used for over a century.

STRENGTH Devastating when fired en masse at close range.

WEAKNESS Like all muskets, it was slow loading.

✪ 01 LANDING AT FOULON

The landing site at Foulon deposits Major General Wolfe's men on the French doorstep and surprises their commander, Louis-Joseph de Montcalm, who is expecting an assault on the Beauport Shore to the north. If the British are quick they can move immediately against Quebec's weak landward defence, or at the very least bring the main French force down from Beauport to engage in a pitched battle, an outcome Montcalm had hoped to avoid.

✪ 02 SURPRISE ATTACK

After overshooting his landing point, Lieutenant Colonel Howe sends a group of volunteers under Captain Delaune along the beach to find the road while he leads three companies clambering up the steep shale slope. The move takes the French sentries charged with defending the road completely by surprise. It proves a key decision.

✪ 03 THE BRITISH ARRIVE

With the French spread out rather than concentrated in defence, and surprised by Howe's brave ascent, the British soon take control of the road and move up to the Plains of Abraham.

✪ 04 HOWE MOVES WEST

As a French battery at Samos opens fire on the British disembarking on the shore, Howe marches west to neutralise it before spreading out in open order to cover the army's rear.

✪ 05 BRITISH FORM UP

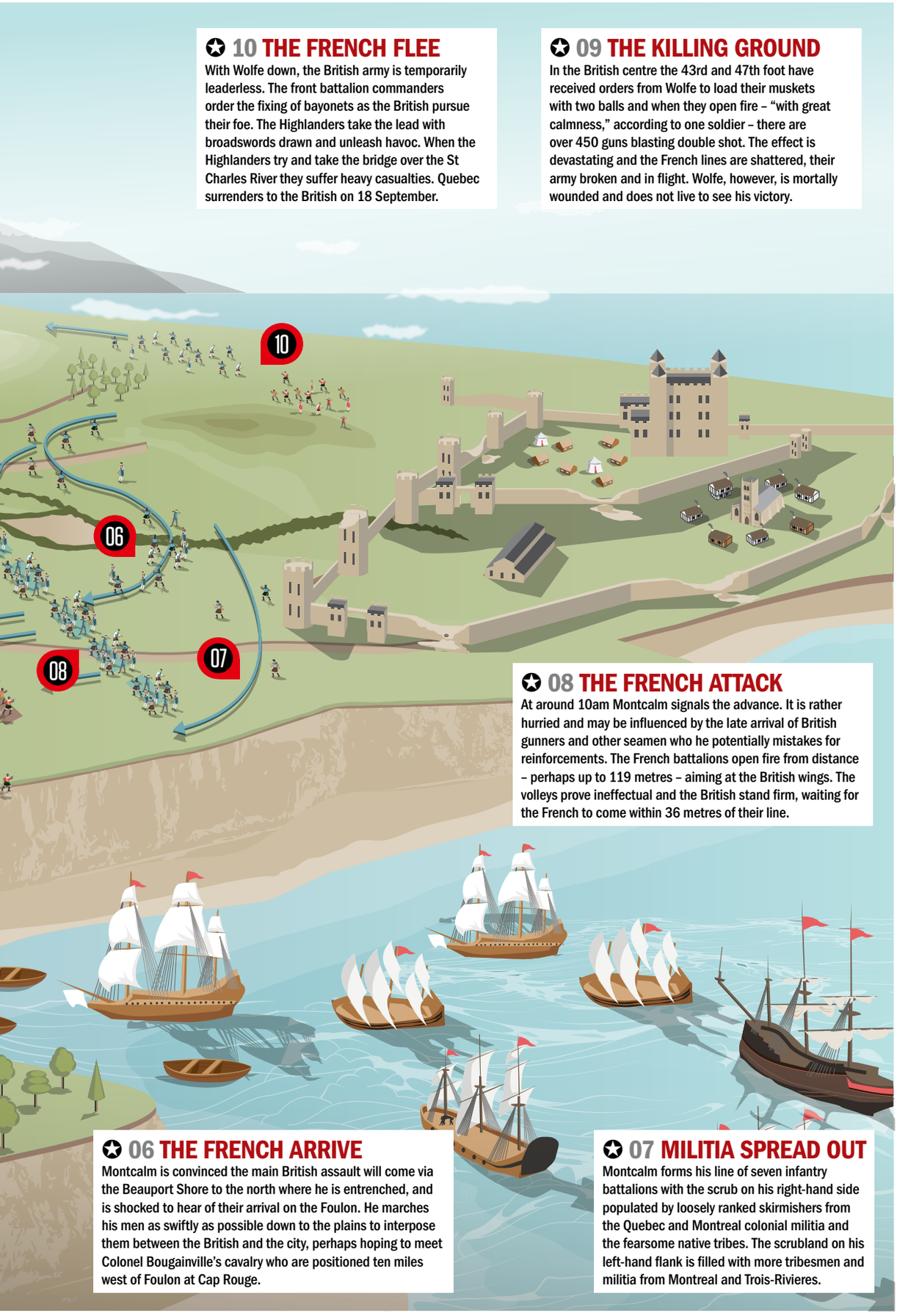
Initially, Wolfe forms up with his back to the river in case of a French counterattack. With no assault forthcoming, he faces them by files to the right and marches out onto the plains. As the full force arrives, Wolfe forms them up in a horseshoe formation, just two ranks deep, with the left wing, commanded by Brigadier General Townshend, positioned to face north protecting against attack from militia or native tribesmen.

✪ 10 THE FRENCH FLEE

With Wolfe down, the British army is temporarily leaderless. The front battalion commanders order the fixing of bayonets as the British pursue their foe. The Highlanders take the lead with broadswords drawn and unleash havoc. When the Highlanders try and take the bridge over the St Charles River they suffer heavy casualties. Quebec surrenders to the British on 18 September.

✪ 09 THE KILLING GROUND

In the British centre the 43rd and 47th foot have received orders from Wolfe to load their muskets with two balls and when they open fire – "with great calmness," according to one soldier – there are over 450 guns blasting double shot. The effect is devastating and the French lines are shattered, their army broken and in flight. Wolfe, however, is mortally wounded and does not live to see his victory.



✪ 08 THE FRENCH ATTACK

At around 10am Montcalm signals the advance. It is rather hurried and may be influenced by the late arrival of British gunners and other seamen who he potentially mistakes for reinforcements. The French battalions open fire from distance – perhaps up to 119 metres – aiming at the British wings. The volleys prove ineffectual and the British stand firm, waiting for the French to come within 36 metres of their line.

✪ 06 THE FRENCH ARRIVE

Montcalm is convinced the main British assault will come via the Beauport Shore to the north where he is entrenched, and is shocked to hear of their arrival on the Foulon. He marches his men as swiftly as possible down to the plains to interpose them between the British and the city, perhaps hoping to meet Colonel Bougainville's cavalry who are positioned ten miles west of Foulon at Cap Rouge.

✪ 07 MILITIA SPREAD OUT

Montcalm forms his line of seven infantry battalions with the scrub on his right-hand side populated by loosely ranked skirmishers from the Quebec and Montreal colonial militia and the fearsome native tribes. The scrubland on his left-hand flank is filled with more tribesmen and militia from Montreal and Trois-Rivieres.

French Army at Quebec

BAYONETS 1,960

MILITIA 1,500

CANNONS 3



Louis-Joseph de Montcalm

LEADER

A cavalryman before becoming Brigadier General and dispatched to lead the French regulars in 'New France', North America.

STRENGTHS Chivalrous, brave and dashing, if impetuous (like many cavalrymen were).

WEAKNESS Engaged the British too swiftly in his last battle.



Skirmishers

KEY UNIT

The native tribes fighting for France caused terror among the British, with their penchant for scalping and mutilation.

STRENGTH Good marksmen operating on the wings to harry the enemy.

WEAKNESS Skirmishers could not stand continued full-scale attack.



Charleville musket (model 1728)

KEY WEAPON

The standard French musket became known as the Charleville musket, named after the armoury in Charleville-Mézières.

STRENGTH Sturdy barrel made it potent in bayonet combat.

WEAKNESSES Slow to load and inaccurate over distance.



ENGLAND EXPECTS

Nelson's flagship Victory signalled the now-famous message to the British fleet – "England expects that every man will do his duty" – prior to the battle. This used a 'telegraph' system whereby each ship passed the message on to the next in the line, communicating it to the entire fleet.

TAKING OUT THE MAST

In the close-quarters fighting at Trafalgar, gun crews on opposing ships simply blasted one another to the point where each was almost entirely wrecked. Taking out the masts of an enemy ship was the best way of crippling its ability to manoeuvre – in effect taking it out of the battle.

FULL BROADSIDE

The most devastating tactic of any ship of the line was to hammer an enemy vessel with all of its available guns on either the port or starboard side. A well-timed broadside could often change the course of a battle, and spell disaster for the opposing ship and its crew.



CARNAGE AT SEA
Though several French and Spanish ships were lost and taken in the battle, not one British ship surrendered at Trafalgar. The French ship Redoubtable became completely surrounded and lost all of her masts during the fighting, eventually forcing the crew to surrender.

BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR

— OFF THE COAST OF TRAFALGAR, — SOUTH-WEST SPAIN 21 OCTOBER 1805

In 1805, Britain was on the brink of invasion by the emperor of France, Napoleon Bonaparte. The Grande Armée, which was gathered in north France, only needed a fleet of ships to carry it across the English Channel and Great Britain would surely fall. That fleet, under the command of Admiral Villeneuve, had given Nelson the chase across the Atlantic Ocean and back as it gathered ships for the intended invasion. Known as the Combined Fleet of Spanish and French ships, it numbered more than enough vessels to ferry the French army securely to England. But first it had to reach France to collect them.

The British Royal Navy was tasked with locating and intercepting the Combined Fleet to stop any chance of it reaching the Grande Armée. Spies in France and Spain had provided ample intelligence regarding Napoleon's plan, as well as the movements of the allied fleet. In September 1805, Villeneuve's ships sat in Cádiz harbour, with Nelson's fleet waiting more than 50 miles offshore. A line of signal ships monitored Cádiz, eagerly waiting for Villeneuve to make a move.

Already a hero back home and among his peers, Nelson had served more than 34 years in the Royal Navy and had put his body on the line for king and country time and again, quite literally. The admiral lost his arm in 1797 while attempting to take Santa Cruz de Tenerife, and also lost his right eye during fighting there.

As the British force approached the south coast of Spain, it anchored further out to sea to conceal its presence from the Combined Fleet, which was still in the harbour. Small frigates were posted closer to land to monitor the coast for any movement of the enemy along the route around the peninsula. At all costs, Nelson wanted to prevent Villeneuve from escaping either north towards the Bay of Biscay and from there to France, or east towards the Gibraltar Strait and from there to the Mediterranean.

The French admiral, meanwhile, was being put under pressure from his emperor back home. His delay in leaving Spain and sailing for France had caused unease among his staff, and resentment from Napoleon, who called him a coward. Worse, Villeneuve had been fed false information about the British fleet and was still unaware that Nelson had arrived off the coast of Spain. Had the Frenchman known that the foremost admiral of the time was tracking his fleet, he may well have avoided the catastrophe he was about to sail right into.

British Fleet

SHIPS 27
GUNS 2,148



Horatio Nelson

LEADER

The formidable British admiral was among the most feared and respected naval commanders of his time.
STRENGTH An unrivalled ability to out-think his enemy tactically.
WEAKNESS His unorthodox methods carried great risk.



HMS Victory

KEY VESSEL

Nelson's famous first-rate flagship.
STRENGTH 104 guns over three gun decks.
WEAKNESS A huge frame made manoeuvring more difficult.



24-pound gun

KEY WEAPON

A hulking cannon capable of immense destruction.
STRENGTH Able to easily penetrate thick hulls.
WEAKNESS Weighing three tons, it was far harder to handle for the gun crew.

01 THE BRITISH FLEET APPROACHES

At 6.30am, the crew of the British ships beat to quarters, preparing the gun decks for battle. As the formation approaches the Combined Fleet, between 11am and noon, Nelson sends out a signal to the entire fleet: "England expects that every man will do his duty." Approaching from the west, with a light wind behind them, the two British Squadrons Windward and Leeward each attack a separate section of enemy ships. They have to endure heavy fire from the enemy without replying as they sail straight into the side of the Combined Fleet's line.

02 COLLINGWOOD ENGAGES SANTA ANNA

Vice Admiral Collingwood's flagship Royal Sovereign receives a broadside from the French ship Fougueux, but holds fire until coming astern of the Santa Anna. A full broadside from Royal Sovereign cuts all the way down the length of the Spanish ship, killing hundreds of its crew. The guns of Royal Sovereign have been 'double-shotted' – each loaded with both grape shot and a ball, to cause more-devastating damage upon impact.

03 THE LEEWARD SQUADRON ATTACKS

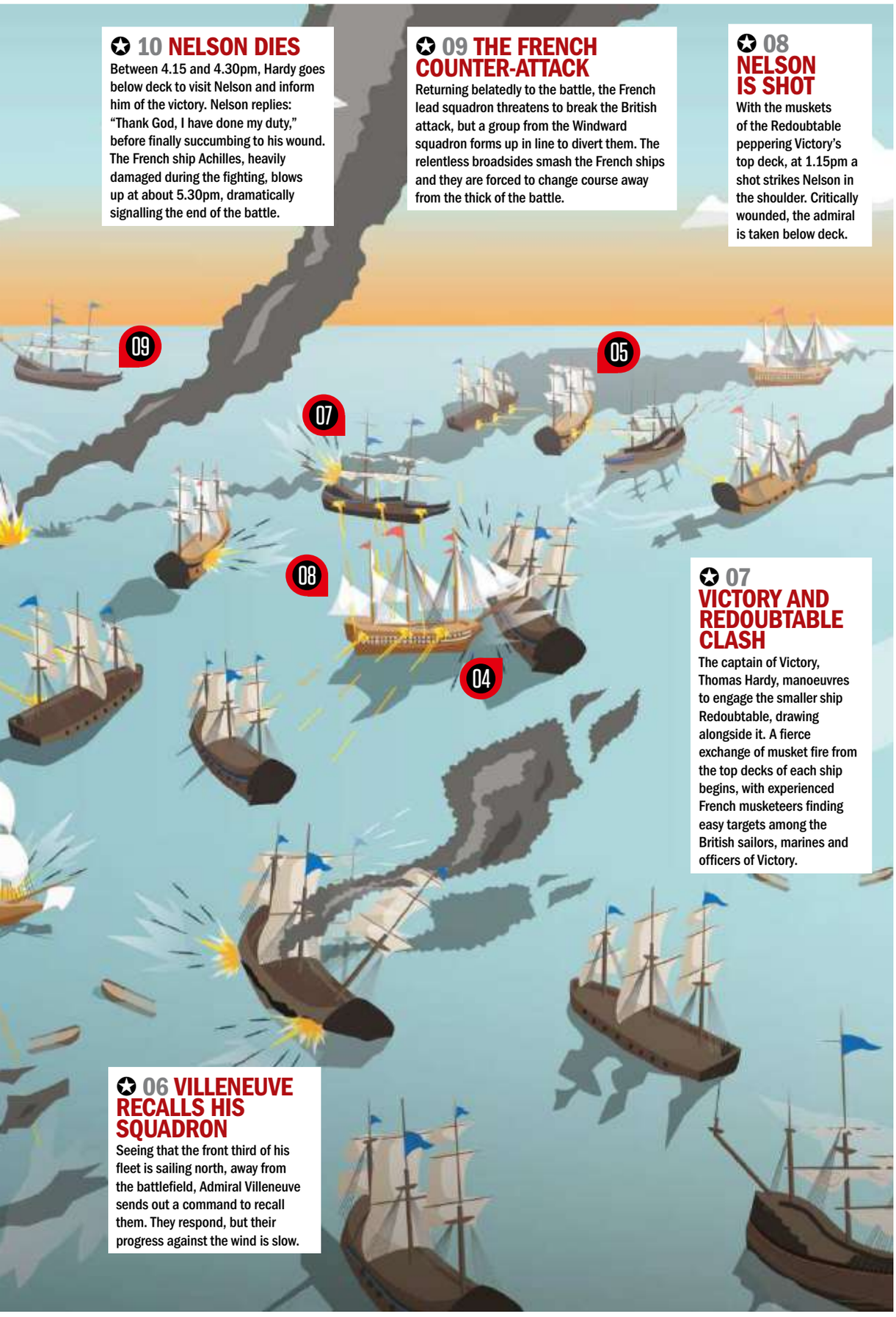
Following their flagship, the ships of the Leeward squadron fan out to assist when Collingwood comes under extreme pressure. The Royal Sovereign manoeuvres within the Combined Fleet, firing both broadsides relentlessly.

04 NELSON ENGAGES

At first feinting to take on the vanguard of the fleet at the very front, Victory suddenly changes course to break the line between Redoubtable and Bucentaure, the French flagship. Unable to find a way through the densely packed ships, Victory rams straight into Redoubtable. Now in deadly close quarters with the enemy, Nelson exchanges broadsides with Redoubtable, Bucentaure and the Spanish flagship Santisima Trinidad. The Windward squadron follows Victory's line and also engages with broadsides.

05 THE TEMERAIRE MANOEUVRES

Moving around Redoubtable to attack its other flank, the British ship Temeraire quickly becomes surrounded by ships firing broadsides at lethally close range. Meanwhile, the remainder of Windward squadron engages this section of the Combined Fleet, as the front section breaks off and begins to sail away.



✪ 10 NELSON DIES
Between 4.15 and 4.30pm, Hardy goes below deck to visit Nelson and inform him of the victory. Nelson replies: "Thank God, I have done my duty," before finally succumbing to his wound. The French ship Achilles, heavily damaged during the fighting, blows up at about 5.30pm, dramatically signalling the end of the battle.

✪ 09 THE FRENCH COUNTER-ATTACK
Returning belatedly to the battle, the French lead squadron threatens to break the British attack, but a group from the Windward squadron forms up in line to divert them. The relentless broadsides smash the French ships and they are forced to change course away from the thick of the battle.

✪ 08 NELSON IS SHOT
With the muskets of the Redoubtable peppering Victory's top deck, at 1.15pm a shot strikes Nelson in the shoulder. Critically wounded, the admiral is taken below deck.

09

05

07

08

04

✪ 07 VICTORY AND REDOUBTABLE CLASH
The captain of Victory, Thomas Hardy, manoeuvres to engage the smaller ship Redoubtable, drawing alongside it. A fierce exchange of musket fire from the top decks of each ship begins, with experienced French musketeers finding easy targets among the British sailors, marines and officers of Victory.

✪ 06 VILLENEUVE RECALLS HIS SQUADRON
Seeing that the front third of his fleet is sailing north, away from the battlefield, Admiral Villeneuve sends out a command to recall them. They respond, but their progress against the wind is slow.



Combined Fleet

SHIPS 33

GUNS 2,630



Pierre-Charles Villeneuve
LEADER

The French admiral's cautious nature had been accused of cowardice by none other than Napoleon.
STRENGTH A numerically stronger fleet at his disposal.
WEAKNESSES Indecision and poorly co-ordinated command structure.



Santisima Trinidad
KEY VESSEL

The largest ship in the battle, this hulking first-rate vessel had four gun decks.
STRENGTH Overwhelming firepower from its 140 guns.
WEAKNESS Slow and unresponsive in light winds.



Chain shot
KEY WEAPON

A highly destructive ammunition ideal for taking out the masts and rigging of ships.
STRENGTH Could cripple an enemy ship by bringing down its mast.
WEAKNESS Only effective when fired at close range.

© Edwards Crooks





ICONIC MOMENT

ENGAGING SHIPS

A painting by Clarkson Stanfield shows the British Navy engaging the French and Spanish ships

1805

BATTLE OF SALAMANCA

SPAIN 22 JULY 1812

The Battle of Salamanca came after a period of careful manoeuvring between the French army of Marshal Auguste de Marmont and a combined British/Portuguese/Spanish force under Arthur Wellesley, the duke of Wellington. Marmont, under pressure to attack his opponent, found it difficult to pin down the wily British fox, who had a reputation for being a defensive genius.

The night before the battle, both armies suffered through a heavy rainstorm, but a warm morning soon began to dry out soldiers and the battlefield. The chance of a meaningful encounter, however, seemed rather remote. Wellington was resolved to withdraw if threatened by Marmont and started his baggage on the journey back to Ciudad Rodrigo. Wellington didn't even have his full army, since



✪ THE FRENCH CAUGHT UNAWARES

Although cavalry units were available to the marching French, the commander, Thomières, did not have any with him at the head of his 7th Division. An effective screen of cavalry might have alerted him to the approaching danger.

✪ FRENCH ARTILLERY ANSWERS

To his credit, Thomières recovered his wits quickly, and by bringing 20 cannon up to join the fray he was able to make a more effective response to Pakenham's surprise attack, but it was to be in vain. His division crumbled and Thomières himself was killed.

✪ THE FRENCH RESISTANCE

Once alerted to the danger, French troops attempted to fight back, but their ability to do so was hampered by the fact they had been so totally surprised, and also because the 7th Division was stretched out across 1.8 kilometres.

3rd Division was on the north bank of the Tormes river.

The sun had done its work with such enthusiasm that the retreating baggage train kicked up a huge pall of dust, which Marmont mistakenly believed to be the signs of a withdrawal. The British troops visible on a commanding area of high ground, infantry from the 1st and Light Divisions, were taken by Marmont to be a rearguard. Seeing (he believed) a chance to secure a relatively risk-free victory, Marmont put his army in motion, intending to outflank and cut off this 'rearguard' by marching the bulk of his army westwards, at the same time as he launched an assault on the position to pin the British troops down.

Disastrously for the French commander, the body of Wellington's army had been hidden from view behind the same high ground on which the 1st and Light Divisions were situated. As the British general watched the French army begin to move, he rearranged his divisions to counter them.

The French divisions marching to the west became disjointed and vulnerable to attack, particularly Thomières' 7th Division, which was pushing recklessly ahead and becoming isolated. Wellington galloped to the extreme right flank of his line, where Pakenham was beginning to arrive with the 3rd Division and the Portuguese cavalry. Wellington's orders were simple: "take those heights in your front, and drive everything before you."

The danger was suddenly as clear to Marmont as it was to Wellington, but as the French commander rushed to respond, he was badly injured by shrapnel, and command devolved to Bonnet, who in turn was wounded shortly afterwards, adding to the confusion in the French position.

Nothing could save Thomières whose division was smashed by Pakenham's infantry and both Portuguese and British cavalry units. Wellington had ordered the 4th and 5th Divisions to advance against the French centre, while a devastating cavalry charge, by the 1,000-strong Heavy Cavalry Brigade, wrought havoc in the disorganised and panicked French units.

The third French commander of the day, General Clausel, launched a counterattack against the exposed flank of the 4th Division, but Wellington was able to call up his reserves to snuff out this last spark of defiance. The French had been routed, suffering losses of around 13,000 dead, wounded and captured. Never again would Wellington be considered an entirely defensive-minded general.



✪ THE 3RD DIVISION STRIKES

Edward Pakenham formed his division into four columns, including two of cavalry, to attack the first units in the French army. After marching for 3.8 kilometres, the British infantry and Portuguese/British cavalry erupted from behind the cover of a wooded slope to stun the isolated French troops.

✪ THE GRENADIERS ATTACK

Bearskins were not worn by British grenadiers at the Battle of Salamanca (they would have been extremely uncomfortable in the Spanish summer), but the grenadiers did play their part in the battle as the most imposing infantrymen in one of Wellington's most renowned divisions.



United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain

TROOPS 46,000

CAVALRY 4,000

CANNONS 54



Duke of Wellington

LEADER

With his careful management of his army, Wellington already had a formidable reputation as a defensive general.
STRENGTH An ability to quickly grasp the lie of the land.
WEAKNESS Before Salamanca, he was believed to be limited to defensive actions.



5th Dragoon Guards

UNIT

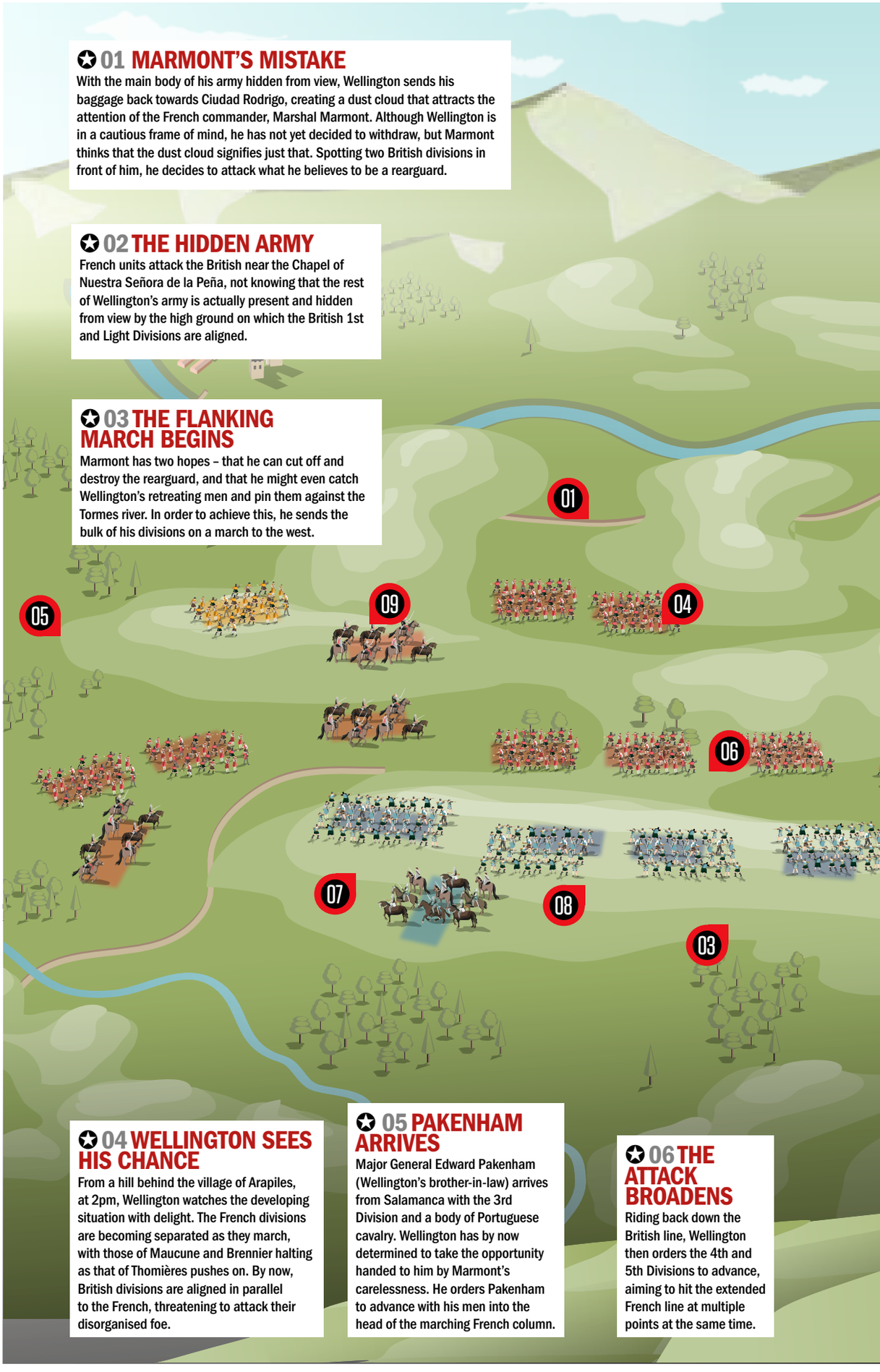
Part of the Marchant's brigade of heavy cavalry, the 5th took part in one of the most devastating cavalry charges of the period.
STRENGTH Almost unstoppable at full charge.
WEAKNESS Infantry in square could spell disaster.



1796-pattern heavy cavalry sword

KEY WEAPON

A clumsy, inelegant weapon, this sword (pictured is the officer's version) was nevertheless lethal in skilled hands.
STRENGTH Great strength, designed for stabbing.
WEAKNESS Not good at slashing, which many troopers reverted to.



01 MARMONT'S MISTAKE

With the main body of his army hidden from view, Wellington sends his baggage back towards Ciudad Rodrigo, creating a dust cloud that attracts the attention of the French commander, Marshal Marmont. Although Wellington is in a cautious frame of mind, he has not yet decided to withdraw, but Marmont thinks that the dust cloud signifies just that. Spotting two British divisions in front of him, he decides to attack what he believes to be a rearguard.

02 THE HIDDEN ARMY

French units attack the British near the Chapel of Nuestra Señora de la Peña, not knowing that the rest of Wellington's army is actually present and hidden from view by the high ground on which the British 1st and Light Divisions are aligned.

03 THE FLANKING MARCH BEGINS

Marmont has two hopes – that he can cut off and destroy the rearguard, and that he might even catch Wellington's retreating men and pin them against the Tormes river. In order to achieve this, he sends the bulk of his divisions on a march to the west.

04 WELLINGTON SEES HIS CHANCE

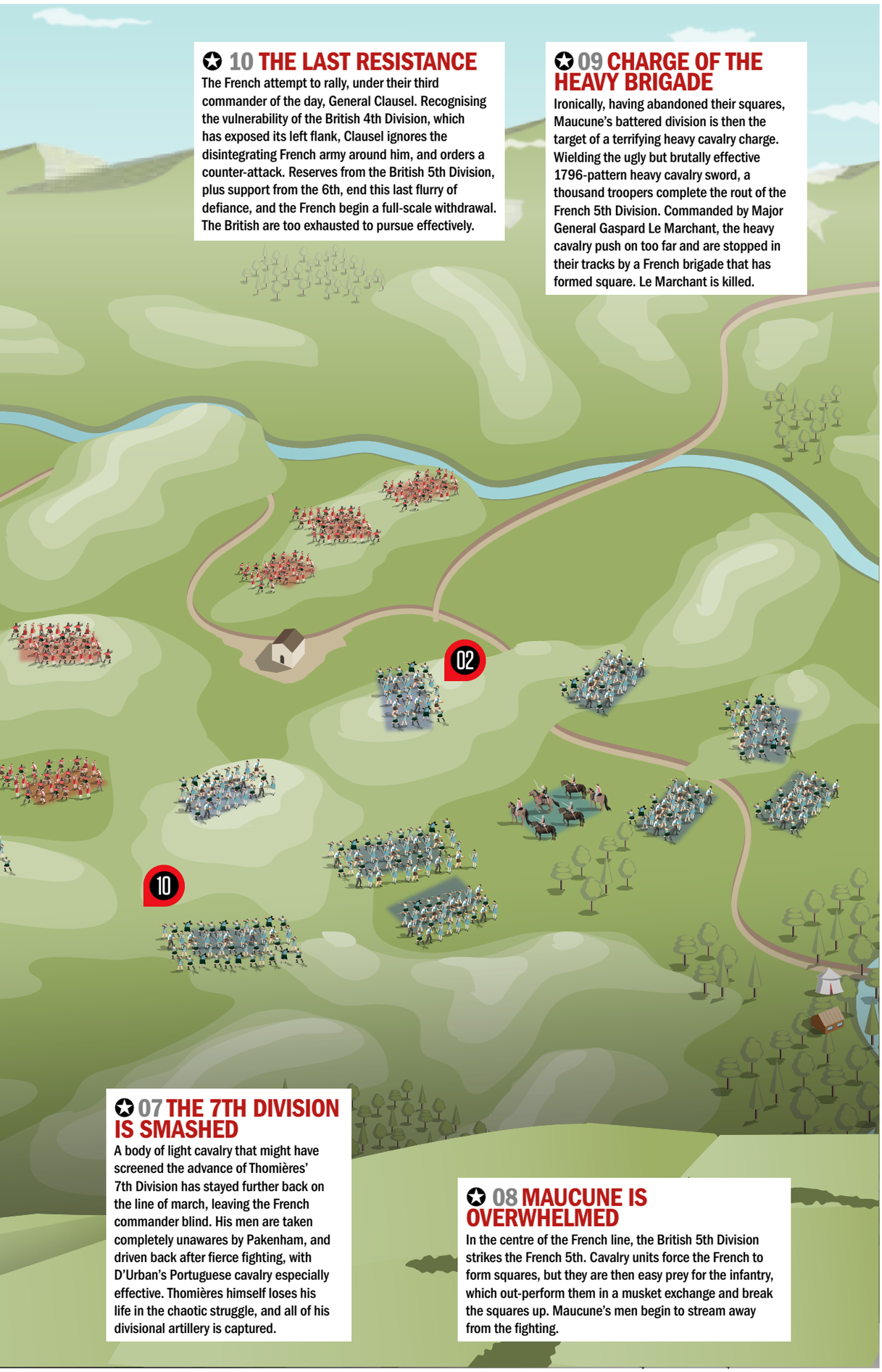
From a hill behind the village of Arapiles, at 2pm, Wellington watches the developing situation with delight. The French divisions are becoming separated as they march, with those of Maucune and Brennier halting as that of Thomières pushes on. By now, British divisions are aligned in parallel to the French, threatening to attack their disorganised foe.

05 PAKENHAM ARRIVES

Major General Edward Pakenham (Wellington's brother-in-law) arrives from Salamanca with the 3rd Division and a body of Portuguese cavalry. Wellington has by now determined to take the opportunity handed to him by Marmont's carelessness. He orders Pakenham to advance with his men into the head of the marching French column.

06 THE ATTACK BROADENS

Riding back down the British line, Wellington then orders the 4th and 5th Divisions to advance, aiming to hit the extended French line at multiple points at the same time.



✪ 10 THE LAST RESISTANCE

The French attempt to rally, under their third commander of the day, General Clausel. Recognising the vulnerability of the British 4th Division, which has exposed its left flank, Clausel ignores the disintegrating French army around him, and orders a counter-attack. Reserves from the British 5th Division, plus support from the 6th, end this last flurry of defiance, and the French begin a full-scale withdrawal. The British are too exhausted to pursue effectively.

✪ 09 CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE

Ironically, having abandoned their squares, Maucune's battered division is then the target of a terrifying heavy cavalry charge. Wielding the ugly but brutally effective 1796-pattern heavy cavalry sword, a thousand troopers complete the rout of the French 5th Division. Commanded by Major General Gaspard Le Marchant, the heavy cavalry push on too far and are stopped in their tracks by a French brigade that has formed square. Le Marchant is killed.

✪ 07 THE 7TH DIVISION IS SMASHED

A body of light cavalry that might have screened the advance of Thomières' 7th Division has stayed further back on the line of march, leaving the French commander blind. His men are taken completely unawares by Pakenham, and driven back after fierce fighting, with D'Urban's Portuguese cavalry especially effective. Thomières himself loses his life in the chaotic struggle, and all of his divisional artillery is captured.

✪ 08 MAUCUNE IS OVERWHELMED

In the centre of the French line, the British 5th Division strikes the French 5th. Cavalry units force the French to form squares, but they are then easy prey for the infantry, which out-perform them in a musket exchange and break the squares up. Maucune's men begin to stream away from the fighting.



France

TROOPS 43,000

CAVALRY 3,500

CANNONS 78



Marshal Auguste de Marmont

LEADER

A friend of Napoleon so perhaps promoted above his abilities, he performed well before meeting disaster at Salamanca.
STRENGTHS An intelligent and educated soldier, completely devoted to his craft.
WEAKNESS Prone to the occasional lapse in concentration, as at Salamanca.



French line infantry

UNIT

Undone by the manner in which their divisions became detached, French infantry still put up stiff resistance.
STRENGTHS Discipline and experience in combat.
WEAKNESS Disastrously strung-out in the prelude to the battle.

Musket Model 1777

KEY WEAPON

The standard weapon of French line infantry, designed to be fired in massed volleys.
STRENGTHS Effective in volley fire and when fixed with a bayonet.
WEAKNESS Inaccurate and with limited effective range.

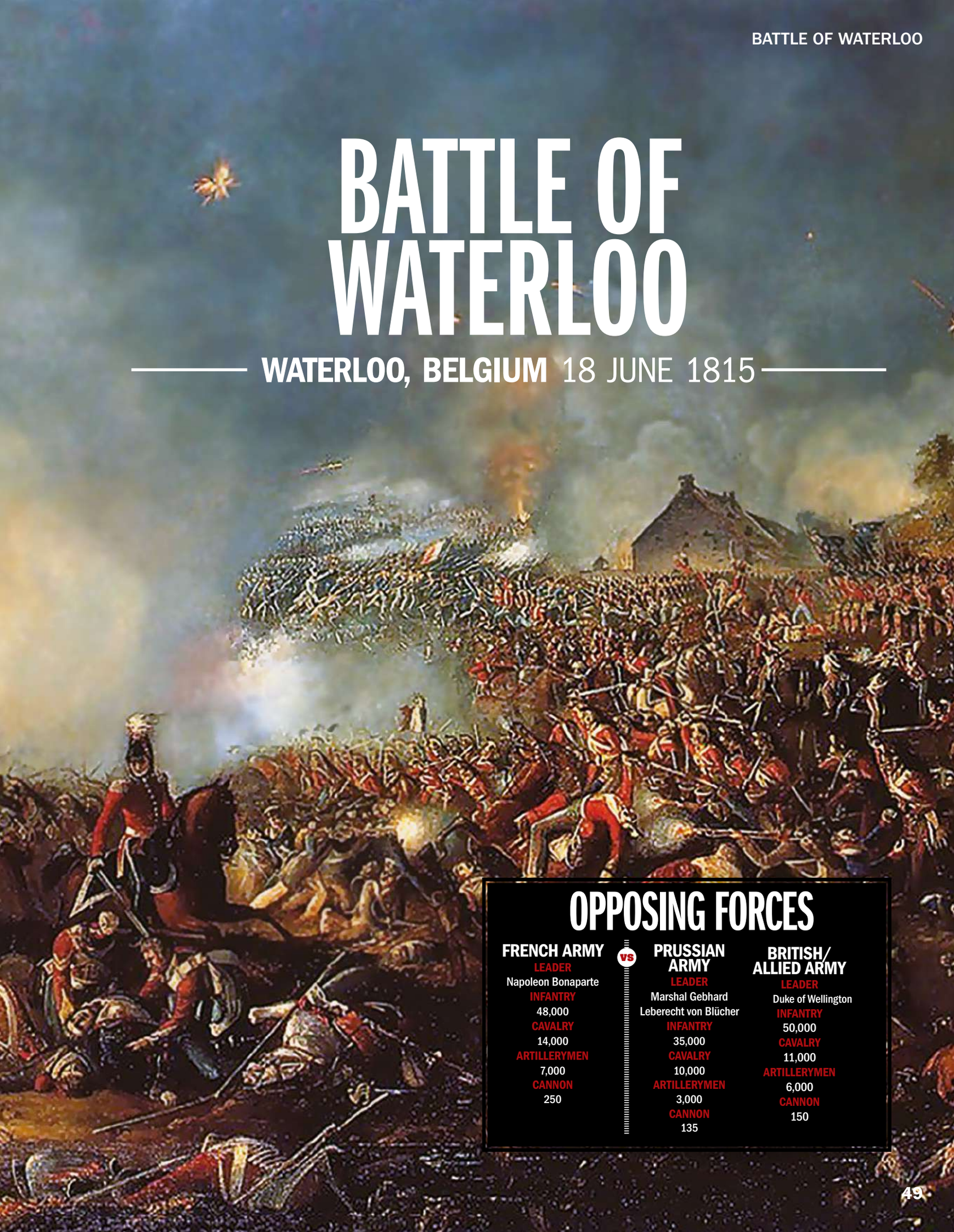


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BATTLE OF WATERLOO

WATERLOO, BELGIUM 18 JUNE 1815



OPPOSING FORCES

FRENCH ARMY		PRUSSIAN ARMY	BRITISH/ ALLIED ARMY
LEADER		LEADER	LEADER
Napoleon Bonaparte		Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher	Duke of Wellington
INFANTRY		INFANTRY	INFANTRY
48,000		35,000	50,000
CAVALRY		CAVALRY	CAVALRY
14,000		10,000	11,000
ARTILLERYMEN		ARTILLERYMEN	ARTILLERYMEN
7,000		3,000	6,000
CANNON		CANNON	CANNON
250		135	150

VS

The reign of King Louis XVIII was turbulent. Civil unrest smouldered in the streets of Paris in the spring of 1815. Sensing opportunity, exiled emperor Napoleon Bonaparte returned to France from the island of Elba. Upon learning the news that Napoleon was active, the nations of the Seventh Coalition, principally Great Britain, Prussia, Russia and Austria, girded their armies to invade France and strangle this renewed reach for power.

After his overtures of peaceful intentions were ignored, Napoleon realised that war was imminent and chose to assume the offensive before his enemies' combined strength became overwhelming. On 15 June, the French Army crossed the Belgian frontier, intent on defeating the two forces that posed the greatest threat. The army of the Duke of Wellington, comprised of British, Dutch, Belgian and German troops, was poised in the Low Countries, while the Prussian Army under Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher was some distance to his left. Napoleon's force initially topped 130,000 men, while the Allied forces amounted to more than 200,000.

Napoleon seized the initiative, planning to defeat the Prussians at Ligny and then the British at Quatre Bras before the two armies could unite. Indeed, the French mauled two corps of Blücher's command at Ligny and nearly did the same to Wellington, who held the crossroads at Quatre Bras with both bravery and bluff before withdrawing to a position astride the road to Brussels along the ridge of Mont-Saint-Jean, 19 kilometres from the Belgian capital and near the village of Waterloo.

Both Napoleon and Wellington understood that the outcome of any decisive battle depended heavily on the Prussians. Wellington informed Blücher that if the Prussian commander could provide support he would stand and fight. Otherwise, he would withdraw north to protect his lines of communication. Licking his wounds after Ligny, Blücher pledged to come to Wellington's aid, marching north through the town of Wavre rather than east and home to Prussia.



In this painting by artist Clément-Auguste Andrieux, French cavalrymen and British infantry clash at the height of the Battle of Waterloo

"PRIOR TO FIRING THE FIRST SHOT OF THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO, NAPOLEON MADE CRUCIAL DECISIONS THAT UNDOUBTEDLY CONTRIBUTED TO HIS EVENTUAL DEFEAT"

Stand and deliver

A master of tactical defensive deployment, Wellington, later known as the Iron Duke, chose his ground well at Waterloo. Wellington recognised the strength of his position along the Mont-Saint-Jean ridge, and planned to use the escarpment to impede any frontal assault by Napoleon's army.

Wellington positioned most of his troops on the ridge's reverse slope astride the Brussels road, allowing some protection from artillery fire and concealing troop numbers and movements from French eyes. On the forward slope he deployed a heavy skirmish line and sent troops to occupy key farmsteads including – right to left – Hougoumont, La Haye Sainte and Papelotte. These positions included orchards, country houses, stone walls and courtyards. Their stout defence would serve as a breakwater, slowing down French assaults against the ridge and Wellington's main line.

With both his flanks anchored and not even a kilometre of wheat fields separating the opposing forces, Wellington placed greater strength to the right of the Brussels road, expecting the Prussians to reach his left flank and support that sector. With his polyglot army of roughly 67,000, Wellington was evenly matched. Napoleon fielded 69,000 troops.

Confidence and catastrophe

The Battle of Waterloo began on the morning of 18 June 1815, and the future of Europe hung in the balance. Supremely confident, Napoleon drew his army up along a nearby ridge, and spotted Wellington's skirmishers. He exclaimed: "I have those English now!" He derided subordinates who expressed concern with Wellington's deployment bragging: "I tell you, Wellington is a bad general, the English are bad troops, and this affair is nothing more than eating breakfast."

Prior to firing the first shot of the Battle of Waterloo, Napoleon made crucial decisions that undoubtedly contributed to his eventual defeat. He ordered a large force under Marshal Emmanuel de Grouchy to follow the Prussians closely, either east towards Prussia or towards Wellington. After learning that the Prussians were marching on Waterloo, he mistakenly asserted that only a portion of Blücher's army was coming rather than his entire command. Grouchy failed to outpace the Prussians to Wavre, compounding Napoleon's error by lacking initiative and following orders to the letter, even after he heard the roar of cannon from the battlefield.

Napoleon's supreme self-confidence may have been his worst enemy at Waterloo. Aside from the fact that he had little respect for Wellington or the fighting prowess of the enemy command he confronted, Napoleon showed little concern that Blücher might lead his sizable Prussian Army onto the field. Even as he launched his main effort against the centre of Wellington's line on the Mont-Saint-Jean ridge, word reached him that soldiers had been spotted on his far-right flank. For a time, it was believed that these might be Grouchy's troops; however, a scout confirmed that the



Marshal Michel Ney, commanding the French left wing at Waterloo, fatefully committed Napoleon's cavalry reserve to an ill-fated charge

infantrymen were Prussian. Napoleon was not dissuaded, and ordered his attack against Wellington's centre to proceed.

Decisive drive delayed

In every battle, time is of the essence, and Napoleon postponed his main attack for about four hours. The reason was simple. Throughout the previous day, heavy rains had turned dirt roads into quagmires. Cavalry and artillery could not move easily in the mud. Horses would tire quickly, and artillery shells might lose effectiveness, miring in the muck rather than showering the enemy with deadly shrapnel.

The delay would allow the ground to dry somewhat, but it also provided precious time for the Prussians to close the distance. Although he approached Waterloo with a reputation for winning, veteran troops, and high morale, Napoleon had evened the odds with Wellington to a degree before the fighting began in the late morning of 18 June.

Harrowing hours at Hougoumont

While the Battle of Waterloo is remembered as one of the most pivotal in history, and its date of 18 June 1815 is well known, the actual hour it began is strangely uncertain. Some sources, including Wellington, noted that Napoleon ordered the assault on the chateau and farmstead of Hougoumont on the Allied right flank at about 10am. Others assert that the fighting began at 11.30am, and still others that it was nearer to noon.

Napoleon sent elements of the 6th Infantry Division, commanded by his brother Jerome Bonaparte, to attack Hougoumont to create a diversion and to goad Wellington into transferring troops from his centre, where the main French thrust would take place, to bolster the garrison at the farmstead. Hougoumont and a narrow lane running north from it were initially defended by four light companies of Wellington's Guards Brigade along with troops of the Hanoverian Brigade, soldiers from German states in service to the British crown. Lieutenant Colonel James Macdonnell of the Coldstream Guards assumed command.

Wellington instructed Macdonnell to "defend the post to the last extremity," and the Allied resistance eventually drew the entire 6th Division into the fight along with most of Marshal Honoré Charles Reille's II Corps and a contingent of French cavalrymen, who slashed at the defenders that were exposed outside the farmstead walls. Napoleon eventually committed nearly 14,000 troops to the fight at Hougoumont against Wellington's 3,500.

The first French foray was thrown back with heavy losses, but ensuing thrusts against Hougoumont from several directions made progress. During one assault, a French lieutenant wielded an axe and breached the north gate. Approximately 30 French soldiers rushed into the courtyard, and a wild melee ensued. Macdonnell and other British officers closed the gate, trapping these Frenchmen, who were slaughtered. As the defenders of Hougoumont ran low on ammunition, a fearless wagon driver braved a hail of fire to deliver supplies.

Wellington watched the desperate attacks, which flooded to the west of the chateau. At various times he brought up a reserve battalion of the Coldstream Guards, a brigade of the King's German Legion, and two brigades of Hanoverian troops. However, he never weakened other sections of his defensive line while reinforcing Hougoumont.

Throughout the afternoon, French infantry continued to assault those Allied troops defending the farmstead, the surrounding

grounds, and the country lane. The British soldiers behind the garden wall knocked loopholes in the brick, firing through them at the onrushing French. Napoleon observed the action at Hougoumont and ordered his artillery to shell the chateau to set it on fire. The building and other structures were destroyed. Only the chapel survived.

Despite the best French efforts, Hougoumont remained in Allied hands after nine hours of virtually continuous fighting. As the contest wore on, Napoleon shifted attention to his main thrust against Wellington's centre. The 'diversion' at Hougoumont had accomplished little. More than 7,500 French soldiers were killed or wounded. If Hougoumont had fallen, the right flank of the Allied army would have been in great peril. After his victory, Wellington commented: "The success of the battle turned on the closing of the gates at Hougoumont."

Bombardment and victory's brink

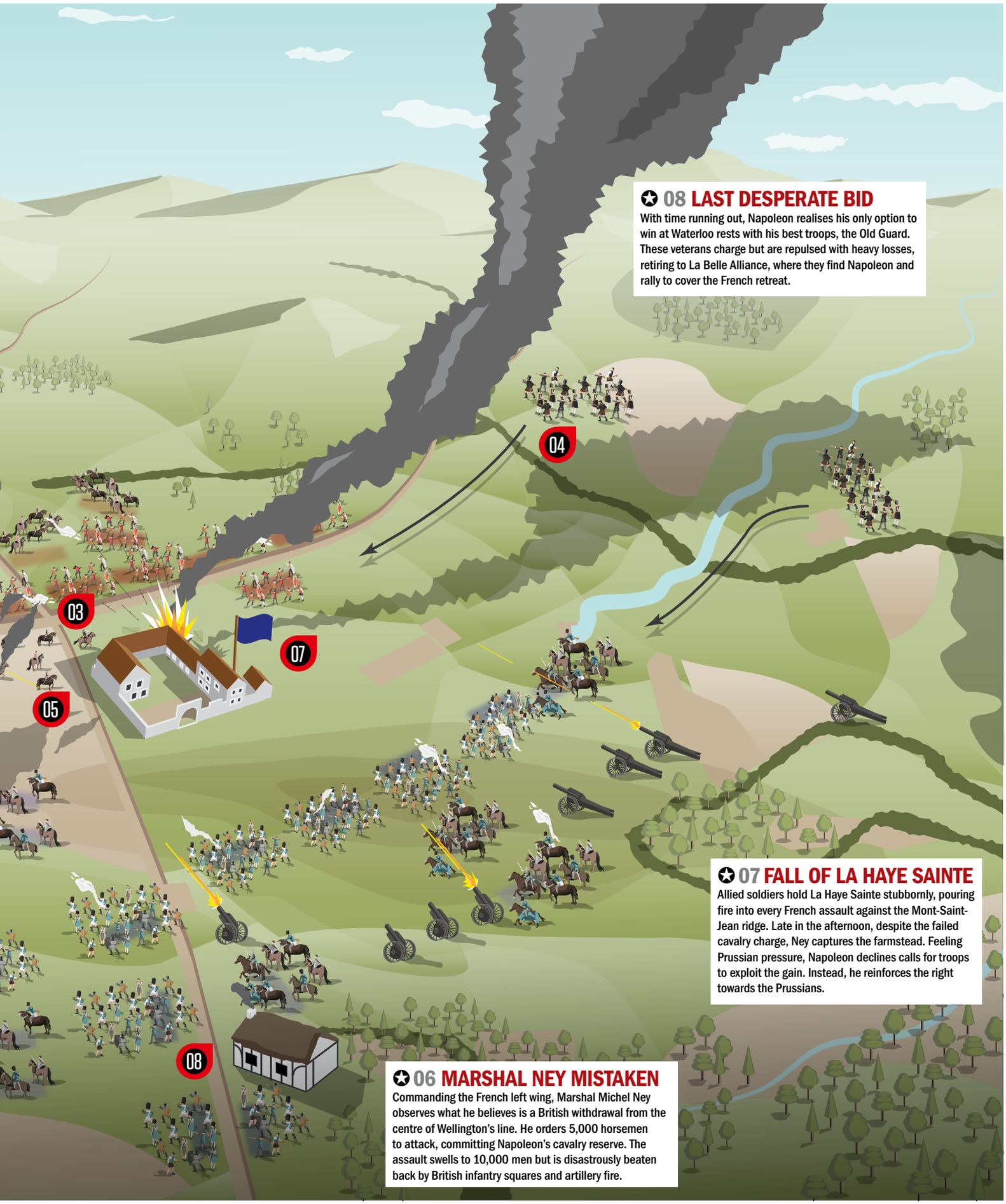
An artillery officer early in his career, Napoleon understood how big guns could influence a battle. He deployed his 84-gun Grand Battery at Waterloo, and just after 1pm gave the order to bombard the centre of Wellington's line on the ridge of Mont-Sainte-Jean. Since Wellington had deployed the bulk of his army on the reverse slope and the rainy weather had left the ground soggy, the effectiveness of the thunderous French barrage was minimised.

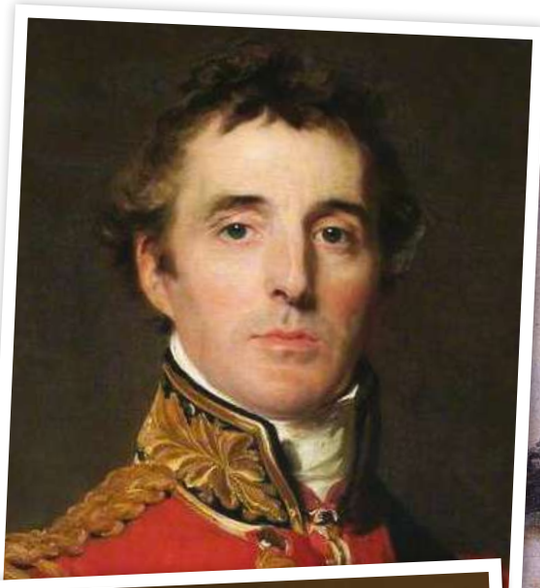
Therefore, the advance of the French I Corps, under the command of Marshal Jean-Baptiste Drouet, Comte d'Erlon, encountered stiff resistance ascending the slope of the Allied-held ridge. Most of the Allied troops d'Erlon faced were veterans of the earlier Peninsular War under the command of Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Picton. These disciplined troops offered a spirited defence. Meanwhile, the farmstead of La Haye Sainte continued to anchor Wellington's centre. Its garrison of British soldiers and the 2nd Battalion of the King's German Legion stood firm and poured fire into the advancing French infantry while British artillery shells tore gaps in their ranks.

Undaunted, the French pressed forward and reached the crest of Mont-Sainte-Jean. For a brief time, it appeared they were on the brink of victory. Swift reorganisation and a rapid advance might rupture the Allied centre. However, at the critical moment, Picton ordered his available soldiers, including a brigade of Scottish Highlanders, to rise from the cover of the reverse slope. The French were staggered, but still they came on with cuirassiers, cavalrymen wearing breastplates of armour, charging into the fray. Picton was shot dead.

Just as his line began to waver, Wellington countered. The Iron Duke ordered the Household Brigade and the Union Brigade, fresh heavy cavalry units, to charge the exposed French flanks. The British horsemen, including the now famous Life Guards, Royal Regiment of Horse Guards, King's Dragoon Guards, 1st Royal Dragoons, 6th Inniskilling Dragoons, and the Scots Greys, thundered forward in an avalanche of man and beast. The charge broke the back of the French assault, and three of d'Erlon's four divisions fell back in disarray. About 3,000 French prisoners were taken. Still, the British horsemen paid a price.




08
LAST DESPERATE BID
With time running out, Napoleon realises his only option to win at Waterloo rests with his best troops, the Old Guard. These veterans charge but are repulsed with heavy losses, retiring to La Belle Alliance, where they find Napoleon and rally to cover the French retreat.
04
03
07
05
07
FALL OF LA HAYE SAINTE
Allied soldiers hold La Haye Sainte stubbornly, pouring fire into every French assault against the Mont-Saint-Jean ridge. Late in the afternoon, despite the failed cavalry charge, Ney captures the farmstead. Feeling Prussian pressure, Napoleon declines calls for troops to exploit the gain. Instead, he reinforces the right towards the Prussians.
08
06
MARSHAL NEY MISTAKEN
Commanding the French left wing, Marshal Michel Ney observes what he believes is a British withdrawal from the centre of Wellington's line. He orders 5,000 horsemen to attack, committing Napoleon's cavalry reserve. The assault swells to 10,000 men but is disastrously beaten back by British infantry squares and artillery fire.







***Left:** The Duke of Wellington chose excellent defensive ground and defeated Napoleon Bonaparte at Waterloo on 18 June 1815*

***Below left:** Napoleon Bonaparte returned from exile on the island of Elba but saw his dream of conquest and power crushed at Waterloo*

Once their blood was up, the British cavalrymen swept on toward French artillery emplacements, slashing at the gunners. However, the furious charge had spent the energy of their horses. In their haste they overextended their advance. The French regrouped and began to close in on the exposed cavalry brigades from all sides. During their fighting retreat, the British horsemen were ravaged by rifle fire and a coordinated countercharge by French lancers. Roughly half their number were killed or wounded.

Wellington had spent his cavalry reserve, but despite the heavy losses the gallant charge had temporarily stabilised the situation in his centre. The action also bought precious time for the Prussians to reach Waterloo in strength.

Marshal Ney's mistake

Known as the 'bravest of the brave' to the soldiers of the French Army, Michel Ney was one of the original 18 Marshals of the French Empire. His earlier service to Napoleon had been exceptional, but Ney then professed loyalty to King Louis XVIII and promised to bring Napoleon back to Paris in an iron cage. When Napoleon was made aware of Ney's pledge, he sent a message to his former lieutenant that reminded Ney of past glories at the emperor's side. It was enough to persuade Ney to abandon the king and rejoin Napoleon.

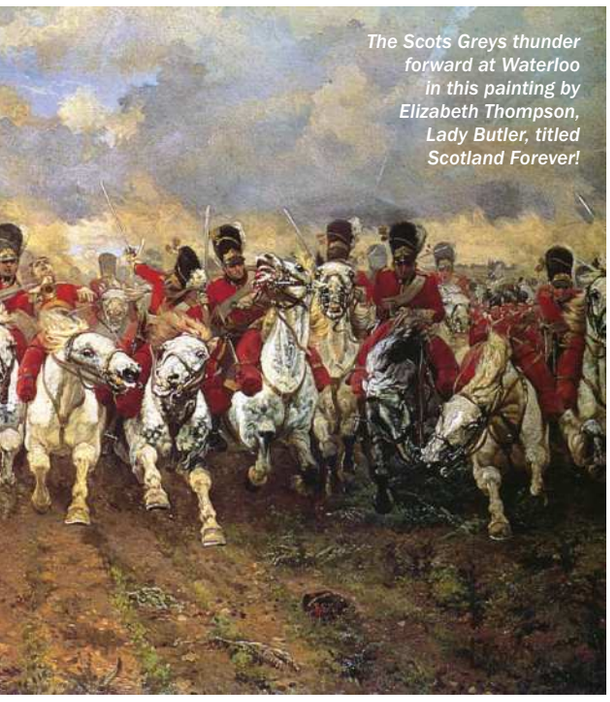
At Waterloo, Ney commanded the left wing of Napoleon's Army. After the failure of the early assaults on Wellington's centre, Ney gathered two brigades of infantry at about 3.30pm and renewed the attack on La Haye Sainte. Although his troops were beaten back, Ney observed what he believed to be substantial numbers of British soldiers in retreat. While actually the evacuation of wounded men, Ney was convinced a great opportunity was at hand. He mustered a brigade of cuirassiers and two divisions of cavalry, and within half an hour the French horsemen, 5,000 strong, were ordered to charge Wellington's line along a front of fewer than 914 metres.

British artillery blasted gaps among the onrushing French cavalrymen, and the British infantry formed squares to repel the assault. Most of Wellington's artillerymen serviced their weapons until the last possible moment before retiring to the relative safety of the infantry squares. The French horsemen thundered up the slope of Mont-Saint-Jean ridge and swept





Formed into defensive squares, British infantry fend off an attack by French cuirassiers attempting to breach Wellington's centre



The Scots Greys thunder forward at Waterloo in this painting by Elizabeth Thompson, Lady Butler, titled Scotland Forever!

"A DEVASTATING VOLLEY TORE THROUGH THE RANKS OF THE OLD GUARD. FRENCH SOLDIERS FELL IN HEAPS"

over the crest. Instead of finding an enemy in retreat, however, they were greeted with volleys of rifle fire from the British. Stunned, the French cavalrymen fell back to the foot of the ridge. They regrouped and tried again, but the piecemeal attack was repulsed. At one point during the ebb and flow of battle, Ney, who had four horses shot from beneath him that day, was seen striking his sword in bitter frustration against a British cannon.

Half the French cavalry reserve was lost, but Napoleon sent additional mounted troops to assist Ney. The number of French horsemen swelled to nearly 10,000, and at approximately 5pm another charge was beaten back by the British artillerymen, who had returned to their guns. The French cavalry rallied and assaulted the British artillery positions and infantry squares at least seven times. Each time they were repulsed. More than a division of French infantry entered the fray by 6pm, and Ney personally led these troops against the Allied centre. This attack fared no better.

Napoleon refused to concede and ordered Ney to seize La Haye Sainte, which the defenders had held throughout the day. The French surrounded the farmhouse and managed to capture the key position. Ney pleaded for reinforcements, but Napoleon declined. Finally aware that the oncoming Prussians posed a great threat to his right flank and rear, Napoleon did send troops to bolster those sectors. At the same time, Wellington exerted great command presence, encouraging his soldiers and repositioning units to buttress his imperiled line while more Prussian troops came up to strengthen his left flank.

Prussian pressure

Often overlooked amid the tales of heroism and sacrifice is the decision made by the 72-year-old Blücher to come to Wellington's support rather than retiring east. Possessing a keen tactical military sense, Blücher discounted the advice of his chief of staff, Field Marshal August Neidhardt von Gneisenau, who doubted Wellington's army could stand up to Napoleon. Nevertheless, once the task was placed before him, Gneisenau urged the Prussian Army forward towards Waterloo with the corps of Marshal Friedrich Wilhelm Freiherr von Bülow, relatively unscathed at Ligny, leading the way.

After the victory at Waterloo, Gneisenau led the Prussian pursuit of the French towards Paris, reportedly capturing Napoleon's carriage. Gneisenau's command of the Prussian forces led to their arrival at the gates of the City of Light ahead of Wellington's army. Although the bravery of the British and Allied soldiers, Wellington's outstanding performance in command, and Napoleon's fatal hubris were key elements in the outcome at Waterloo, the Prussian contribution was significant.

The Old Guard dies

As the afternoon waned at Waterloo, Napoleon surveyed the battlefield and realised events were slipping from his control. Thousands of men and horses lay dead and dying. The centre of Wellington's line was holding. The Prussian Army was pressing his right flank and rear. Ney's heroic but fruitless charges had decimated the cavalry reserve. Napoleon knew he had to act. One last bid for victory lay with his finest troops – the Old Guard.

At approximately 7pm, Napoleon summoned the Old Guard to form up and follow him north. These veterans cheered their emperor as they marched. Napoleon transferred tactical command to Ney, and the Old Guard split into two columns: two battalions heading towards the defiant farmstead of Hougoumont and the rest towards the stubborn Allied centre along Mont-Saint-Jean ridge. As the Old Guard advanced, wearing bearskin hats, Wellington's artillery, loaded with double shot and canister, opened fire. The French lines did not waver.

Wellington watched and waited in the midst of his Guards brigades, veterans of earlier fighting against the French on the Iberian Peninsula. The riflemen were ordered to lie out of sight on the ground along the reverse slope of the ridge and wait for the command to rise.

Marching on a front about 70 soldiers wide, the French were taken under flanking fire from the British line that overlapped both ends. They continued up the muddy, body-strewn slope. When they reached 36 metres, the command rang out: "Stand up Guards! Make ready! Fire!"

A devastating volley tore through the ranks of the Old Guard. French soldiers fell in heaps. In seconds, the 1st Foot Guards took advantage of the shock, charging with fixed bayonets directly into the Old Guard. The 52nd Foot edged to the right down the side of the ridge, then wheeled to their left and poured heavy flanking fire into the enemy. The Old Guard tried to deploy, wavered, broke, and fled back to Napoleon, who waited at La Belle Alliance, a country farm and inn on the Brussels road.

Wellington ascended to higher ground, surveyed the battlefield, and ordered his regiments forward against the crumbling French flank. His remaining cavalry pursued fleeing French soldiers, slashing at them with sabers. The Prussians pushed forward at Plancenoit, but Napoleon's troops held long enough to allow the Old Guard to rally at La Belle Alliance and permit the defeated army to escape. Order was not restored in the ranks until the soldiers had crossed the French border at Phillipeville.

The short-lived revival of Napoleon's dream of empire was destroyed in a day. He was again banished into exile, on the island of St Helena, where he lived the rest of his life. Casualties at Waterloo topped 50,000, the French suffering 29,000 killed and wounded, the Anglo-allies 15,000, and the Prussians 7,000. The price had been high, but Napoleon was finished.

The Battle of Waterloo stands among the most significant engagements in history. The Allied victory was the climax of Napoleon's bid for power during a period that has come to be known as the 100 Days. The French defeat also ended the Napoleonic Wars, which had raged off and on for more than two decades.





ICONIC MOMENT

HOUGOUMONT FARM

British soldiers fend off a French attack. This chateau was a focal point of Napoleon's strategy in the Battle of Waterloo.

1815



✪ CHARGE OF THE 16TH

Already distinguished by their bright-red tunics (the regiment was known as the 'Scarlet Lancers'), the 16th Lancers performed heroically at Aliwal, launching a number of devastating but costly charges against infantry, cavalry and artillery formation.

✪ THE LANCE

An ancient weapon, the lance had mostly disappeared from European battlefields by the 18th century, but Polish 'Uhlan' units never abandoned it, and it made a comeback during the Napoleonic Wars. Lancer units wore Polish-style 'tschapkas' instead of the shako favoured by other light cavalry regiments.

✪ SIKH ARTILLERY

As well as its formidable infantry, the Sikh Army could call upon a professional and large artillery train. As many as 67 guns were present at Aliwal, but the vast majority (some sources claim all) was lost, either captured by Sir Harry Smith's forces, or sunk in the Sutlej.



PRIDE OF THE KHALSA
The Sikh infantry was highly disciplined, having been trained in the European manner, and fought fiercely at Aliwal. Dressed in red tunics and blue trousers, with their distinctive turbans, the Sikh infantry was as stubborn as it was tenacious.

BATTLE OF ALIWAL

THE PUNJAB, INDIA
28 JANUARY 1846

The Sikh Empire, set up in the Punjab by Ranjit Singh, was likely to become a target of British expansionism in the region. The Sikh Army, known as the 'Khalsa', was superbly trained, and both its infantry and artillery regiments could hold their own against European units. It was also unruly and it took a man of great strength to keep them in order, which was not a problem while Ranjit Singh lived, but became one after his death in 1839.

Without a strong guiding hand, the Khalsa grew, both in influence and size, until it was virtually unmanageable and attracting attention from the British, who strengthened forces along the border with the Punjab. The subsequent outbreak of the First Anglo-Sikh War, in 1845, was a surprise to nobody. The Battle of Ferozeshah, on 21-22 December, was hard fought and costly for both belligerents, with the British force, under Sir Hugh Gough, shocked by the tenacity of the Sikhs and the heavy casualties incurred. Gough's leadership was partly blamed as he favoured unimaginative frontal assaults, which may have worked against an undisciplined horde, but not against a force like the Khalsa.

Sir Harry Smith was originally given a relatively small command, tasked with protecting the lines of supply for Gough's army, but steady reinforcements on both sides resulted in a sizeable engagement when Smith's force clashed with that under Ranjodh Singh, around the village of Aliwal, on 28 January 1846. Of particular concern to Smith was the large number of cannon under Khalsa colours. Recognised as excellent artillerymen, the Sikhs' advantage in guns of more than two-to-one could be decisive, and a tentative advance from Smith to open the battle was met with such a strong response he immediately changed tack. He ordered two reserve brigades to attack the village of Aliwal itself and threaten the Sikh line from the flank. The brigades, comprising a mixture of British and Bengal Native regiments, as well as Ghurkas, made steady progress and were soon driving the Khalsa elements out of the village.

Although Ranjodh Singh quickly ordered cavalry to contest the British advance, it was driven away by British and Indian horsemen. Smith's infantry then threatened to roll up the Sikh line, and cut off its retreat across the Sutlej. Ranjodh Singh responded by unleashing more cavalry, on the opposite side of the battlefield, to threaten Smith's left flank as his infantry advanced. Countering this attack, a squadron of the 16th Lancers, along with elements of the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry, charged into the Sikh horsemen, driving them from the battlefield. A battalion of the Sikh's elite infantry, the Avitabile Regiment, was caught in the charge and formed into a defensive triangle, but was broken by the 16th Lancers, allegedly when a headstrong horse jumped over the ranks of Sikh infantry. The reward for these heroics was a simple 'Well done 16th' from Harry Smith as they trotted back to the lines. The Sikhs had attempted to pivot back in the face of the advancing British and Indian units, but eventually buckled and broke, suffering losses of up to 3,000, while British and Indian casualties numbered just 589. Historian Sir John Fortescue would later call Aliwal "the battle without a mistake," and it paved the way for victory in the war.



The East India Company

TROOPS 10,000

CAVALRY 2,000

CANNONS 32



SIR HARRY SMITH

LEADER

A career soldier who fought at Waterloo, Smith had performed well at Mudki and Ferozeshah.
STRENGTHS Renowned for his good luck and enthusiasm for his job.
WEAKNESS Limited experience as an independent commander.



16TH (THE QUEEN'S) REGIMENT OF (LIGHT) DRAGOONS (LANCERS)

KEY WEAPON

Formed in 1759, the regiment's rather cumbersome name was shortened to 16th (The Queen's) Lancers in 1861.
STRENGTHS Speed and proficiency with the lance.
WEAKNESS Vulnerable to artillery fire.



LANCE

KEY WEAPON

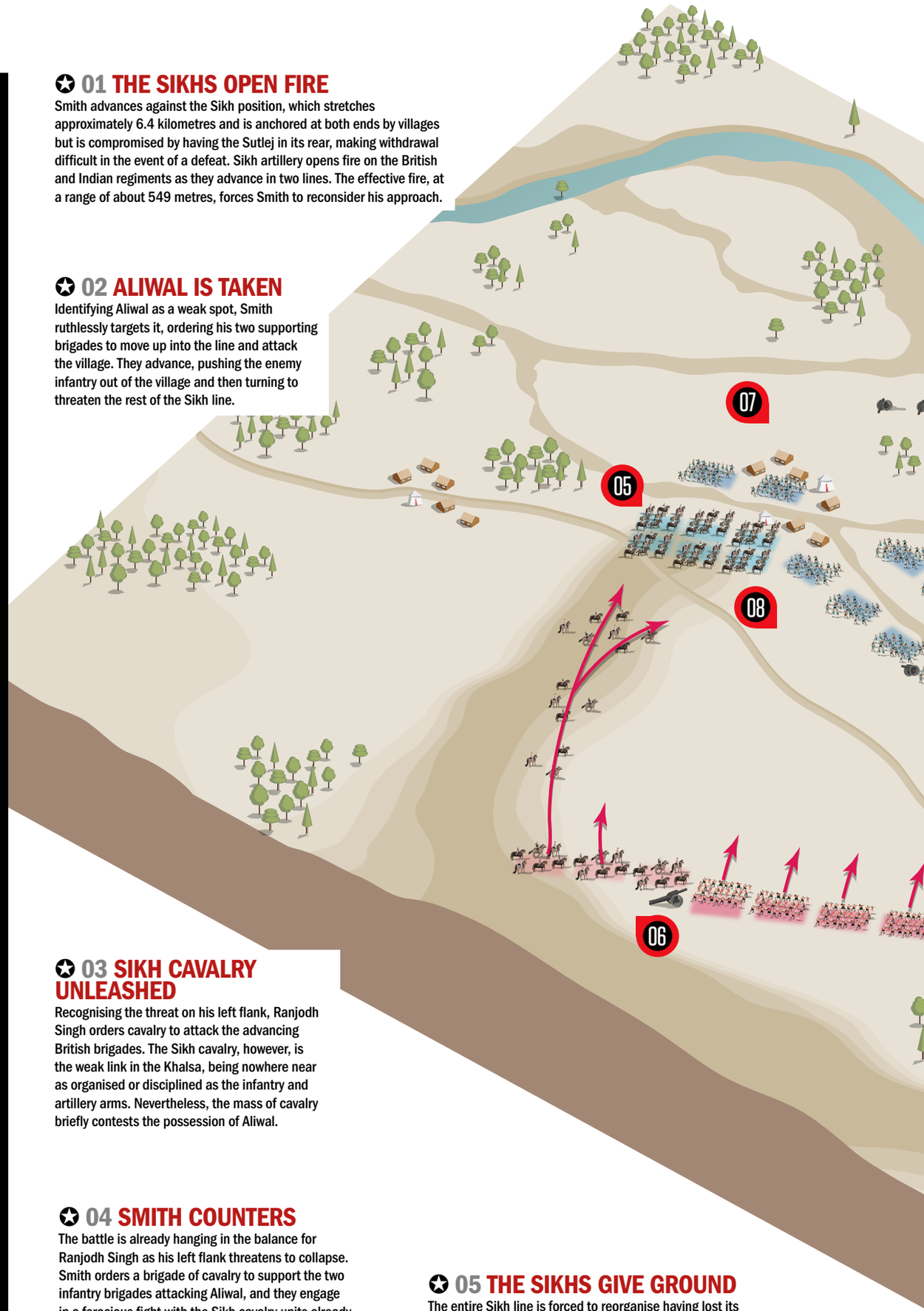
An elegant weapon, dating back to antiquity, which went on to become a key feature on the 19th-century battlefield.
STRENGTH Devastating when used on the charge.
WEAKNESS Troopers were vulnerable to enemy sabres if their initial charge failed.

✪ 01 THE SIKHS OPEN FIRE

Smith advances against the Sikh position, which stretches approximately 6.4 kilometres and is anchored at both ends by villages but is compromised by having the Sutlej in its rear, making withdrawal difficult in the event of a defeat. Sikh artillery opens fire on the British and Indian regiments as they advance in two lines. The effective fire, at a range of about 549 metres, forces Smith to reconsider his approach.

✪ 02 ALIWAL IS TAKEN

Identifying Aliwal as a weak spot, Smith ruthlessly targets it, ordering his two supporting brigades to move up into the line and attack the village. They advance, pushing the enemy infantry out of the village and then turning to threaten the rest of the Sikh line.



✪ 03 SIKH CAVALRY UNLEASHED

Recognising the threat on his left flank, Ranjodh Singh orders cavalry to attack the advancing British brigades. The Sikh cavalry, however, is the weak link in the Khalsa, being nowhere near as organised or disciplined as the infantry and artillery arms. Nevertheless, the mass of cavalry briefly contests the possession of Aliwal.

✪ 04 SMITH COUNTERS

The battle is already hanging in the balance for Ranjodh Singh as his left flank threatens to collapse. Smith orders a brigade of cavalry to support the two infantry brigades attacking Aliwal, and they engage in a ferocious fight with the Sikh cavalry units already there. Multiple charges are needed to drive the Sikh cavalry away, but the infantry brigades are then able to resume threatening the Sikh flank and their route of retreat to the Sutlej.

✪ 05 THE SIKHS GIVE GROUND

The entire Sikh line is forced to reorganise having lost its anchor point at Aliwal. It swings back towards the Sutlej, hinging on the village of Bhundri. The advancing British, however, now have an exposed left flank, and a second large body of Sikh cavalry emerges to threaten it.

✪ 10 THE RETREAT

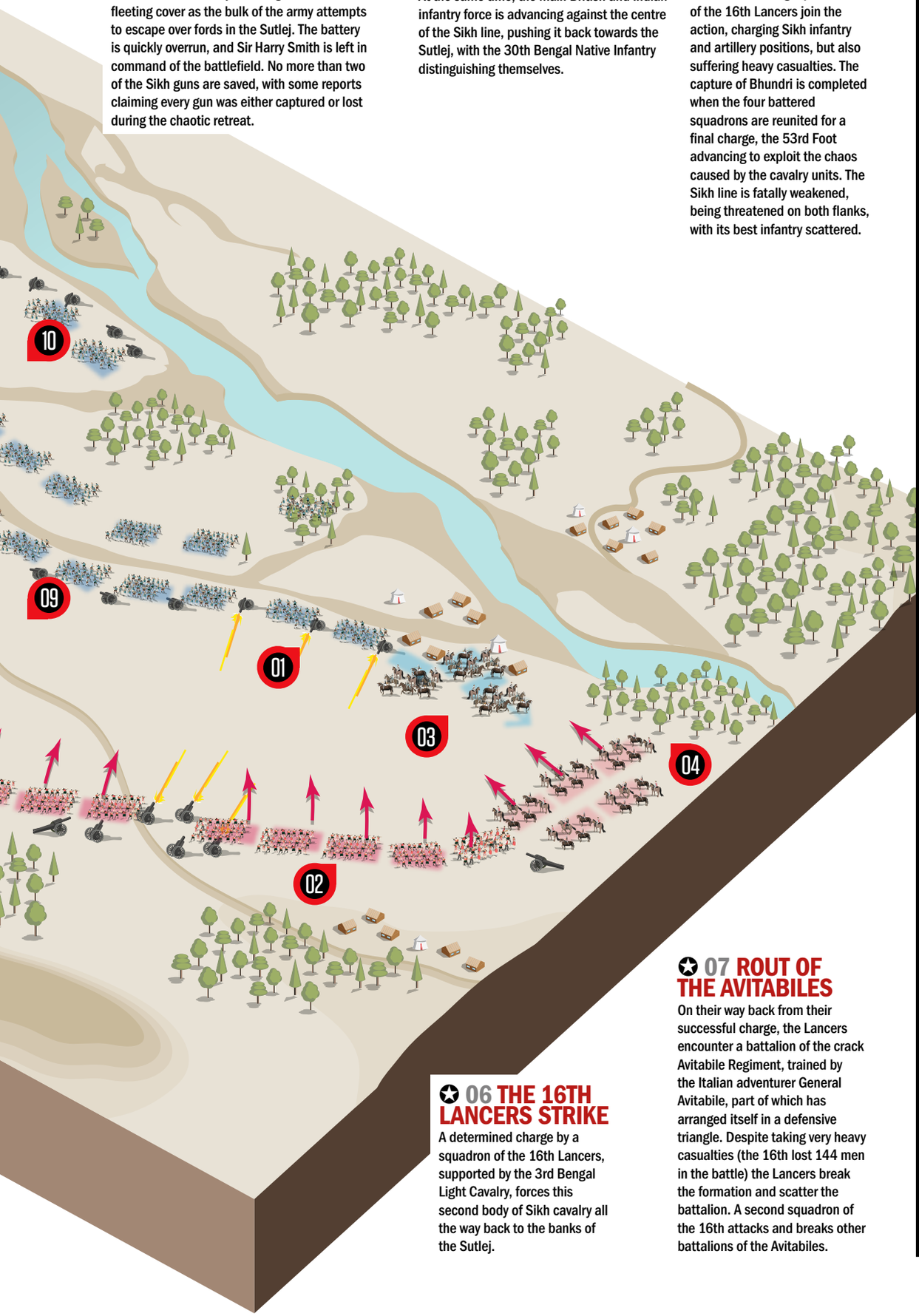
Ranjodh Singh's army is defeated and starts to withdraw. A battery of nine guns offers fleeting cover as the bulk of the army attempts to escape over fords in the Sutlej. The battery is quickly overrun, and Sir Harry Smith is left in command of the battlefield. No more than two of the Sikh guns are saved, with some reports claiming every gun was either captured or lost during the chaotic retreat.

✪ 09 THE SIKHS ARE PUSHED BACK

At the same time, the main British and Indian infantry force is advancing against the centre of the Sikh line, pushing it back towards the Sutlej, with the 30th Bengal Native Infantry distinguishing themselves.

✪ 08 BHUNDRI IS TAKEN

The two remaining squadrons of the 16th Lancers join the action, charging Sikh infantry and artillery positions, but also suffering heavy casualties. The capture of Bhundri is completed when the four battered squadrons are reunited for a final charge, the 53rd Foot advancing to exploit the chaos caused by the cavalry units. The Sikh line is fatally weakened, being threatened on both flanks, with its best infantry scattered.

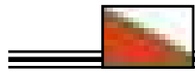


✪ 06 THE 16TH LANCERS STRIKE

A determined charge by a squadron of the 16th Lancers, supported by the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry, forces this second body of Sikh cavalry all the way back to the banks of the Sutlej.

✪ 07 ROUT OF THE AVITABILES

On their way back from their successful charge, the Lancers encounter a battalion of the crack Avitabile Regiment, trained by the Italian adventurer General Avitabile, part of which has arranged itself in a defensive triangle. Despite taking very heavy casualties (the 16th lost 144 men in the battle) the Lancers break the formation and scatter the battalion. A second squadron of the 16th attacks and breaks other battalions of the Avitabiles.



Sikh Empire

TROOPS 15-20,000 TOTAL

CANNONS 67

RANJODH SINGH

LEADER

An aristocratic Sikh from the Majithia family, he was a skillful and resourceful commander.
STRENGTH Trained by French instructors in military leadership.
WEAKNESS Chose a poor position at Aliwal.



KHALSA ARTILLERYMAN

KEY VESSEL

The highly trained Sikh artillery was modelled on European units, and was well respected by its British opponents.
STRENGTHS Disciplined crews and plentiful guns.
WEAKNESS Vulnerable if not protected by infantry.



HEAVY CANNON

KEY WEAPON

The Sikh's great advantage in artillery at Aliwal was a major problem. It meant British cavalry spiked guns whenever they had the chance.
STRENGTHS Powerful, accurate and long-ranging weapon.
WEAKNESS Cumbersome and difficult to move when out on the battlefield.

© Edwards Crooks

BATTLE OF INKERMAN

SEVASTOPOL, RUSSIA 5 NOVEMBER 1854

Sensing they were on the verge of victory, hundreds of British soldiers charged down the eastern slope of Inkerman Ridge at mid-morning on 5 November 1854, with large numbers of routed Russian infantry before them. A few minutes earlier, the British had repulsed what seemed to be their last attack against a hotly contested position called the Sandbag Battery.

After the position changed hands several times following the Russians' surprise attack at dawn, George, the Duke of Cambridge arrived at the Sandbag Battery after a forced march with his Guards Brigade to reinforce elements of the British Second and Fourth divisions defending the strongpoint. To the north and east, the Russians were in full flight. Bodies of fallen soldiers slain by Minié rifles at point-blank range or bayoneted in the abdomen lay stacked up like cordwood around the nine-foot-high parapet.

Those Russians who survived the slaughter had thrown down their weapons and laid themselves before the British, wailing for mercy. Victory hung in the air.

Many of the British at the forward outpost pursued the retreating Russians. However, once they ascended into the valley, the Russian drums and bugles sounded the call for a fresh attack on the heights to their rear. Although the fog partially obscured the view uphill, they saw fresh waves of Russians engulf the Sandbag Battery.

The British had sorely miscalculated, and they would pay a heavy price for their folly. Those who had chased the Russians prematurely began climbing the slopes from where they had come. Grim-faced soldiers who had tasted a few precious drops of victory just minutes before now hoped to slip past the Russians in the fog to the safety of the British breastworks on Home Ridge. The fight on Inkerman Ridge was far from over.

Tsar demands attack

Like a shark that smells blood in the water, Tsar Nicholas I had watched the decline of the Ottoman Turks to his south with a keen interest. Hoping to further degrade the Turks' hold on

Fourth Division Commander Major General George Cathcart is mortally wounded just as his troops launch a bayonet attack against the Russians



OPPOSING FORCES

BRITISH & FRENCH		RUSSIAN
LEADERS		LEADERS
FitzRoy Somerset, Lord Raglan; Brigadier General John L Pennefather		General Prince Alexander Menshikov; Lieutenant General Peter Andreivich Dannenberg
INFANTRY		INFANTRY
16,000		35,000 men
GUNS		GUNS
34		134



the Balkans, in 1853 he proclaimed his right to protect the 12 million Orthodox Christians still living under the Turkish yoke in that region. But the French and English, who tried to maintain a balance of power in Europe and Asia that favoured their political and trade interests, interceded on behalf of what was dubbed 'the sick man of Europe'.

Turkish decline in the Balkans, as well as central Asia and Siberia, challenged western European interests in India and China. Nicholas issued an ultimatum to Ottoman Sultan Abdulmecid I in March 1853. Nicholas's emissary Prince Alexander Menshikov gave the sultan eight days to acknowledge Russia as protector of the Orthodox Christians. However, when the sultan refused, Russian soldiers invaded the Balkans in July 1853. After their diplomatic intervention failed, Britain and France girded for war against Russia.

The Allies believed the best way to halt Russian aggression in the region was to capture the Russian naval base at Sevastopol, located on western tip of the Crimean Peninsula.

With that lofty objective in mind, they landed on the west coast of the Crimea in mid-September and marched on Sevastopol. Fearing his army would be trapped in the port city, General Prince Alexander Menshikov marched out of the base with the majority of his forces in order to retain his ability to manoeuvre against the British and the French. The Allies, who benefited from naval superiority, secured the port of Balaclava and repulsed a Russian attempt to capture it on 25 October.

Time was not on the Russians' side. When Tsar Nicholas learned that the Allies planned to substantially reinforce their army in the Crimea, he sent his sons, Grand Princes Michael and Nicholas, not only to boost the army's morale but also to prod Menshikov into launching a fresh attack that would defeat the Allies before they were reinforced. The Allies were ripe for such an attack because they did not have enough forces on hand to completely invest Sevastopol, as well as protect Balaclava and the supply corridor between the two points. The French held the siege lines west of the city and the British manned those to its east.

The Russians managed to maintain a corridor connecting the city with the interior of the Crimean peninsula by way of a road that ran parallel to Sevastopol's eastern roadstead. The Russians were able to do this because the guns of their ships, bottled up in the harbour by the Allied navies, were able to cover the northern extremity of Inkerman Ridge.

Reinforcements arrive

The Russians conducted a reconnaissance in force against the British Second Division, which anchored the right flank of the Allied army, on the afternoon of 26 October in a clash that became known afterwards as Little Inkerman. Lieutenant General George de Lacy Evans, commander of the division, conducted a masterful defence by drawing the Russians into the teeth of massed artillery that broke up their attack.

To strengthen Menshikov's army in preparation for the large-scale attack, Nicholas ordered two Russian divisions from the Balkans to the Crimea. The Russian 10th and 11th divisions arrived from Bessarabia on 2 November. In compliance with the Tsar's wishes, Menshikov planned to send these two divisions, as well as another already at Sevastopol, against the British Second Division on the morning of 5 November. Once the British had been driven off the ridge, the Russians would be able to shell the Allied troops in the trenches at Sevastopol, which would make the Allied siege works indefensible.

Lieutenant General Fedor Ivanovich Soimonov's 10th Corps would advance from Sevastopol to assault De Lacy Evans's troops, while Lieutenant General P Ya Pavlov's 11th

"THOSE RUSSIANS WHO SURVIVED THE SLAUGHTER HAD THROWN DOWN THEIR WEAPONS AND LAID THEMSELVES BEFORE THE BRITISH, WAILING FOR MERCY. VICTORY HUNG IN THE AIR"

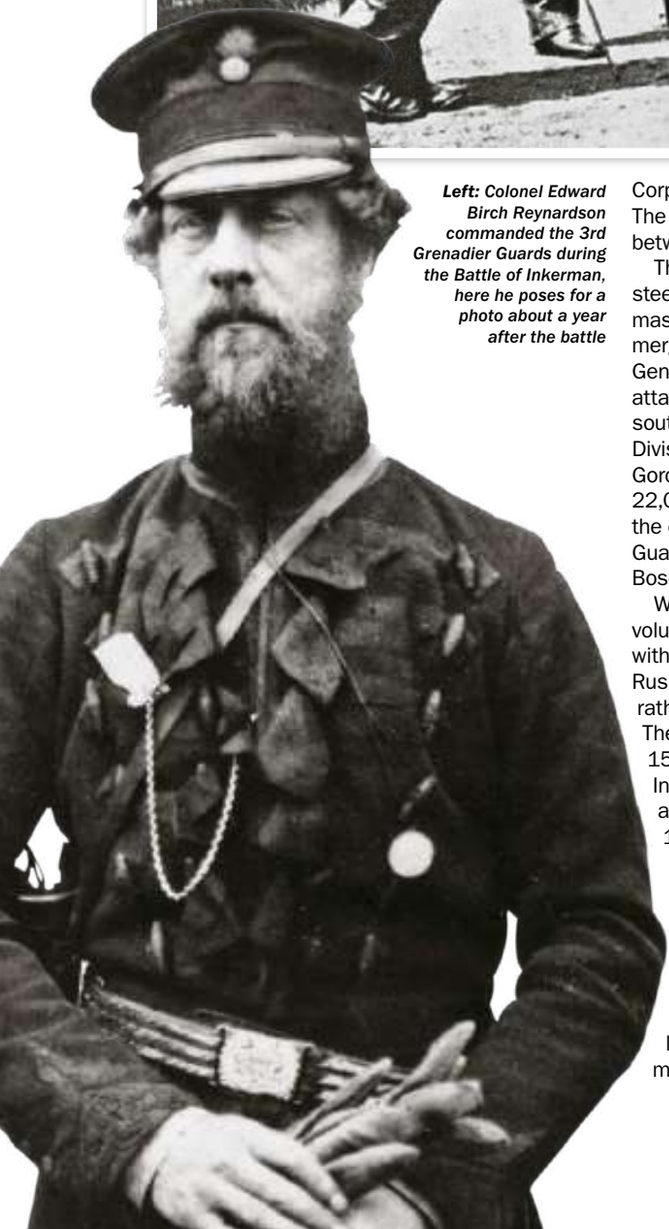




The Grenadier Guards stand tall with their tattered colours, after helping the Second Division hold Inkerman Ridge in the face of fearsome odds



The Commander of the British Light Division, Lieutenant General Sir George Brown (1790 - 1865) and his staff



***Left:** Colonel Edward Birch Reynardson commanded the 3rd Grenadier Guards during the Battle of Inkerman, here he poses for a photo about a year after the battle*

Corps would attack from the Tchernaya Valley. The Combined 16th/17th Division would be split between Soimonov and Pavlov.

The Russians would ascend the ridge from steep ravines on both sides that would largely mask their approach. Once the two columns merged on Inkerman Ridge, Russian Lieutenant General Peter Dannenberg would direct the attack. To prevent Allied reinforcements on the south end of the ridge coming to the Second Division's aid, Russian Lieutenant General Gorchakov was to make a strong feint with his 22,000-strong corps on the Inkerman Plain to the east. This included the Duke of Cambridge's Guards Brigade and Major General Pierre Bosquet's division.

While the British infantry were motivated volunteers, the Russians were conscripts with little training. Also unlike the British, the Russians preferred to fight with the bayonet rather than trade volleys with their opponents. Their outdated muskets were only accurate to 150 yards and had a top range of 300 yards. In contrast, the British Minié rifles were deadly accurate at 300 yards and effective at up to 1,000 yards.

The rugged terrain over which the Russians would attack heavily favoured the defending British. It consisted of rocky ravines and hills that were covered with thick brush and blister-like rocky protrusions. In the days leading up to the offensive, steady rains had soaked the landscape, turning barren patches into muddy morasses, and making the rocks so slippery that it was near impossible to get a solid footing on them.

An important command change had taken place in the Second Division as a result of an unforeseen development following Little Inkerman. De Lacy Evans had suffered a severe fall from his horse, meaning command devolved to Brigadier General John L Pennefather, commander of the division's first brigade. A general with an abundance of experience leading troops in India, he liked to fight from the front and keep close tabs on those under his command as the battle developed.

A soldier's battle

Soimonov's 19,000-man corps was on the move before dawn on 5 November. His troops marched in a drizzling rain south east through the Careenage Ravine that paralleled Inkerman Ridge to the west. A thick fog concealed them from the sharp eyes of British pickets. Pennefather had half a dozen picquets, which were forward outposts, each manned by a company of 100 soldiers, arrayed 500 yards north of his main position.

The grey-uniformed Russian infantry ascended the slippery ridge at 5.45am. They charged with fixed bayonets, yelling at the top of their lungs as they struck the picquets. "The Russians came on with the most fiendish yells you can imagine," said a captain with the 41st (Welch) Regiment. British riflemen at isolated picquets tried their best to stem the onslaught, but many found their cartridges were too damp and they could not fire their rifles. The situation was chaotic; the fog

made it nearly impossible for either side to see what was happening. “We could see no further than a few feet ahead of us,” said a Russian captain. Soimonov had an early success when his troops captured Shell Hill from a picquet manned by the 41st Regiment.

Although the fog cloaked the Russian attack, it ultimately had a negative effect on both sides. For one, the mist made it impossible for officers commanding battalions and companies to know the precise location of their troops and monitor their performance. Additionally, it became impossible to rally them if they became disheartened. As a consequence, during the morning it often fell to groups of soldiers to make decisions that ordinarily would be made for them by their officers. For this reason, Inkerman is known as a ‘soldier’s battle’.

While the Russian artillerists hauled their guns into position atop Shell Hill, Pennefather sent eight companies forward to reinforce the picquets. Rather than order the companies to fall back to the division’s main line at Home Ridge, he sought to slow the momentum of the Russian attack until reinforcements could arrive. The stalwart British riflemen fought back from behind rock outcroppings and scrub thickets.

The Second Division benefitted from a defence in depth. Shell Hill and the picquets formed the outer belt. The middle belt consisted of a field fortification position known as ‘the barrier’ in the centre and the Sandbag Battery on the far right. The inner belt was the fortified Home Ridge astride the Post Road, which ran along the spine of Inkerman Ridge. All the British field guns were deployed behind embrasures at Home Ridge; therefore the Sandbag Battery had no guns on the day of battle.

Of the 8,500 British at Sevastopol, more than half were positioned on Inkerman Ridge and adjacent ridges to the south. As soon as he realised that a major attack was under way, Pennefather sent requests to the British Guards Brigade, 4th Division and Light Division requesting immediate assistance.

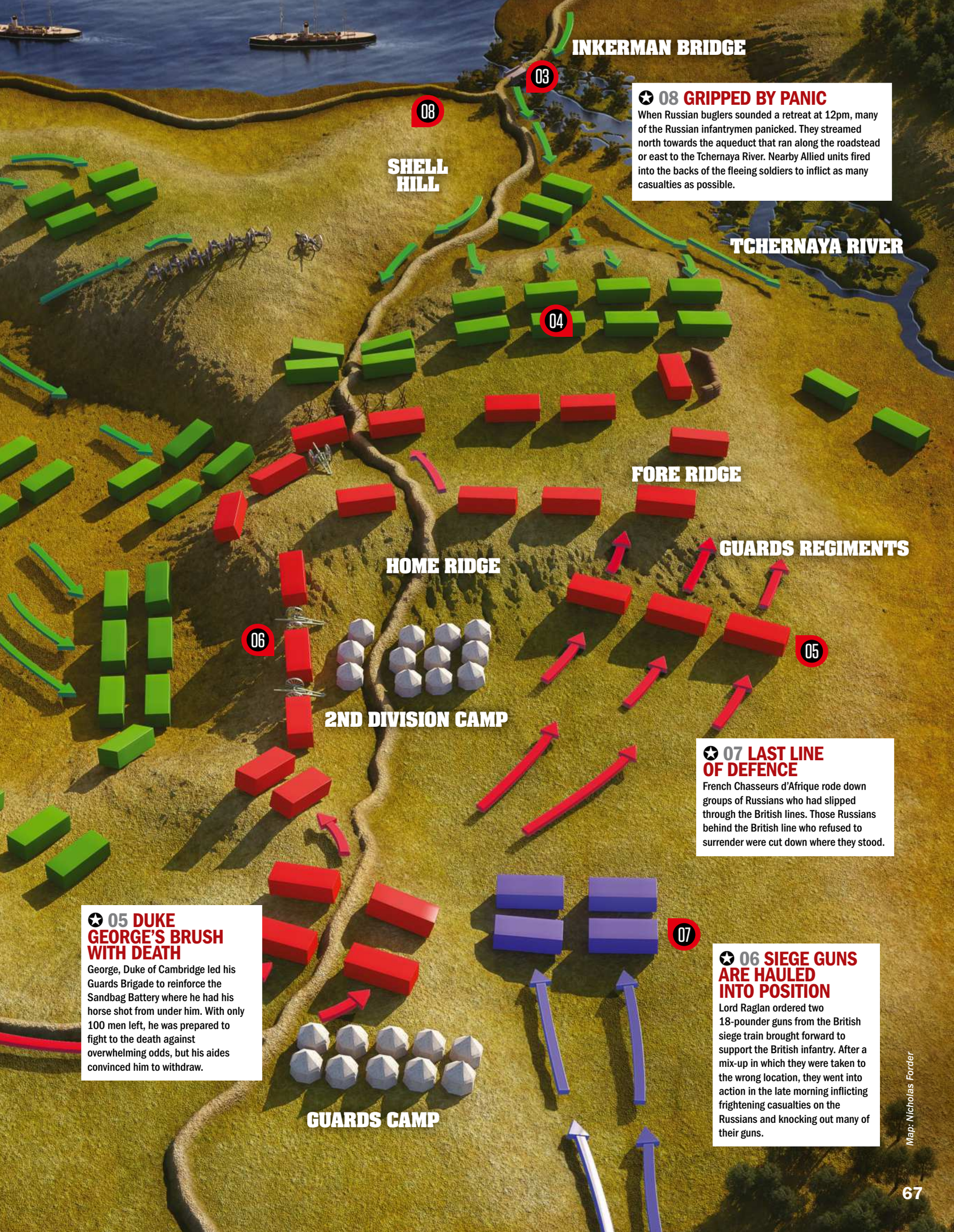
Pennefather desperately needed help because by that time, Pavlov’s 16,000-strong corps had bridged the Tchernaya River and was ascending Inkerman Ridge from three points. The Russians then pressed their attack against the British forces on a 1,000-yard front that stopped them from bringing the full weight of their numbers. Lieutenant General Sir George Brown, the commander of the 4th Division, arrived during the second hour of the battle with his six regiments. Concerned about his left flank, Pennefather directed him to send a substantial portion of those troops to support elements of the 47th (Lancashire) Regiment, which



***Left:** The rifle cartridge, or Minié ball, used by the Pattern 1853 Enfield caused large wounds and could shatter bone on impact*



“THOSE RUSSIANS BEHIND THE BRITISH LINE WHO REFUSED TO SURRENDER WERE CUT DOWN WHERE THEY STOOD”



✪ 08 GRIPPED BY PANIC

When Russian buglers sounded a retreat at 12pm, many of the Russian infantrymen panicked. They streamed north towards the aqueduct that ran along the roadstead or east to the Tchernaya River. Nearby Allied units fired into the backs of the fleeing soldiers to inflict as many casualties as possible.

✪ 07 LAST LINE OF DEFENCE

French Chasseurs d'Afrique rode down groups of Russians who had slipped through the British lines. Those Russians behind the British line who refused to surrender were cut down where they stood.

✪ 05 DUKE GEORGE'S BRUSH WITH DEATH

George, Duke of Cambridge led his Guards Brigade to reinforce the Sandbag Battery where he had his horse shot from under him. With only 100 men left, he was prepared to fight to the death against overwhelming odds, but his aides convinced him to withdraw.

✪ 06 SIEGE GUNS ARE HAULED INTO POSITION

Lord Raglan ordered two 18-pounder guns from the British siege train brought forward to support the British infantry. After a mix-up in which they were taken to the wrong location, they went into action in the late morning inflicting frightening casualties on the Russians and knocking out many of their guns.

Map: Nicholas Forder



was heavily engaged with the 3,300-strong Ekaterinburg Regiment.

"They came on like ants"

After the first two hours of battle, Pennefather's strategy was working to perfection. Although there seemed to be no end to the battalion and company columns of Russians that emerged from the fog, the formidable firepower of the British riflemen resulted in heaps of dead wherever they attacked.

With the addition of Pavlov's guns, the Russians had upwards of 100 pieces in action on Shell Hill and adjacent ground. Russian shells whistled overhead and exploded, sending deadly shrapnel into the thin British ranks. The principal regiments manning the barrier and the Sandbag Battery were Pennefather's 30th (Cambridge) Regiment and 41st Regiment, respectively. Four battalions from the Lakoutsk Regiment forced the Cambridge troops, who were low on ammunition, to withdraw to the Home Ridge. Meanwhile, Russians from the Okhotsk and Seleghinsk regiments repeatedly stormed the Sandbag Battery. Hand-to-hand fighting with bayonets and clubbed muskets occurred as the Russians swarmed over the battery.

The enemy charges broke over the parapet like waves of a storm-tossed sea against a rockbound headland. Pavlov continued to feed fresh troops against the Sandbag Battery. The Russian commanders failed to realise that the position contained little strategic value and their main effort should have been directed toward punching through Pennefather's Home Ridge breastworks. Brigadier General CB Adams fed reinforcements from his brigade of the Second Division into the fight to bolster the hard-pressed Welch riflemen. Adams was nearly slain by the thrust of a Russian bayonet, but Sergeant George Walters blocked the blow in time.

The Sandbag position changed hands several times during the prolonged Russian onslaught. Pavlov continued to feed fresh men into the fight in a bid to capture the Sandbag position. "They came on like ants," wrote a British private with the 49th (Hertfordshire) Regiment. Some British soldiers who exhausted their ammunition clobbered the Russians who got inside the battery with stones. The din of battle swelled to new heights. Shells crashed, bullets zipped, buglers and drummers announced fresh attacks and men yelled and screamed at the top of their lungs. The Russians seemed to have won the isolated fight when fresh British reinforcements came rushing up the Post Road at 8.00am.

Lieutenant General Cathcart brought elements of his 4th Division, which were armed with outdated percussion smoothbore muskets, to assist Pennefather. Brigadier General Thomas Goldie led eight companies from his brigade forwards to bolster the centre. They rushed towards the barrier just in time to check the advance of the Lakoutsk Regiment. By now, the Okhotsk Regiment had captured the Sandbag Battery having driven out Pennefather's troops.

The Duke of Cambridge, who had arrived on the field with 1,300 Guards in three regiments, launched his crack troops against the Russian left in a bid to retake the Sandbag Battery. Advancing side by side, the 3rd Grenadier Guards and the 1st Coldstream Guards came charging downhill from high ground on the Fore Ridge into the disorganised Russian ranks. They swept the Guards over the lip of a projection known as the Kitspur, sending many of them tumbling into Saint Clement's Ravine.

The Guards were sucked into the vortex of battle at the Sandbag Battery. Each time a fresh column of Russians attacked, the Guards fired into their ranks and then gave them cold steel. The position changed hands four times during the course of the next hour, but the Guards's numbers dwindled as the hour wore on.

At about the same time the Guards arrived, French Major General Pierre Bosquet arrived with the vanguard of his division. He held his position on Sapoune Heights to the south until he was satisfied that Gorchakov was not going to launch a major assault against his position. Marching



Left: British cavalry fiercely clash with Russian artillerymen and the countering Russian horsemen

"OVER THE COURSE OF FIVE HOURS OF HEAVY FIGHTING, THE RUSSIAN FORCES SUFFERED AROUND 12,000 CASUALTIES, WHEREAS THE ALLIES LOST ABOUT 4,300"

to Pennefather's aid, he was astonished when two British officers told him his troops were not needed. Bosquet then stationed his men behind the British right just in case they were required.

Spirited counterattacks

Raglan and Pennefather watched the Russian assaults against the British centre with alarm. Raglan sent an aide to Cathcart instructing him to take six companies from his second brigade held in reserve and deploy them between the barrier and the Sandbag Battery to plug a gaping hole in the British line.

Cathcart had plans of his own – he spied elements of the Seleghinsk Regiment advancing unchecked in the valley east of Inkerman Ridge. He sent his men charging downhill against the Russian flanking force. It was a foolish move. Once they arrived on the lower ground, the men of the Fourth Division realised they were heavily outnumbered. A Russian sharpshooter fired a shot that struck Cathcart in his head, and he tumbled to the ground, mortally wounded. Bosquet wasted no time and ordered his troops forwards to shore up the British right flank.

The British also faced a major crisis at in their centre. Dannenberg massed 12 battalions for a major assault against the Home Ridge. Four battalions of the Lakoutsk Regiment spearheaded the attack. Major General Charles Denis Bourbaki led his French rifles forward to meet the attack and they blunted some of its force; however, small groups of Russians penetrated the Allied main line and made it to the south slope of Inkerman Ridge.

At the Home Ridge emplacements, the Russians captured three guns belonging to Captain John Turner's G Battery of the Royal Artillery, but a small force of French Zouaves deployed nearby launched a spirited counterattack that recovered the guns. The Russian gunners worked on Shell Hill to try to break the British centre. Pennefather cobbled together four regiments from his own division and other British divisions to hold Home Ridge.

The arrival of the French disheartened Dannenberg. Although he had a total of 12,000 reserves available with which he could continue the fight, the growing strength of the Allied force led him to doubt whether or not he could make any further progress. He ordered a retreat at 12pm – both Menshikov and the grand princes protested vehemently, but Dannenberg was unshakeable in his resolve. When the buglers sounded a retreat, many of the Russian soldiers panicked and fled east towards the Tchernaya River rather than west to Sevastopol.

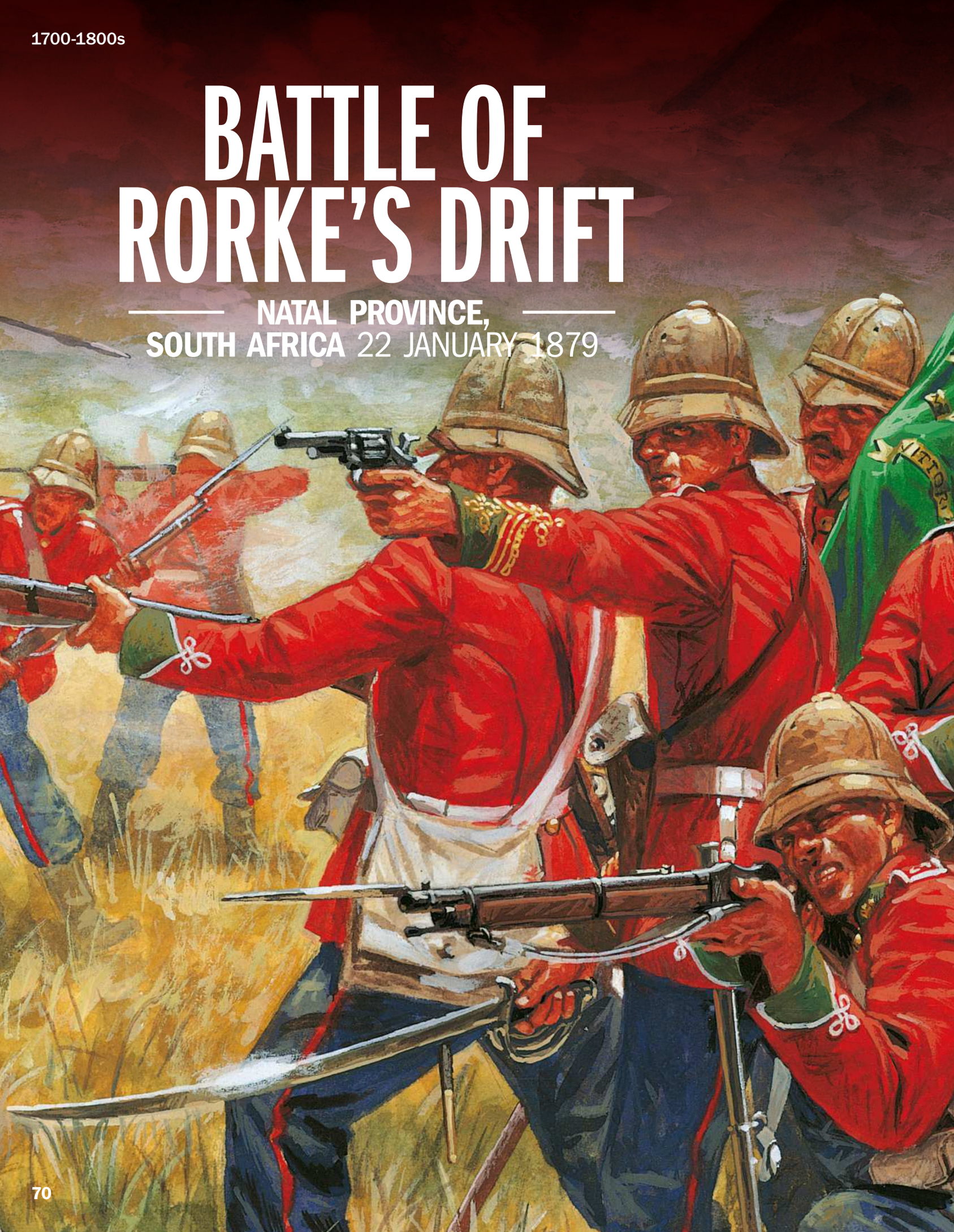
Over the course of five hours of heavy fighting, the Russian forces suffered around 12,000 casualties, whereas the Allies lost about 4,300. Because of their losses, the Allies had to wait for reinforcements to arrive in order to resume offensive actions. The Russian high command, which was already pessimistic about its chances to force the Allies to lift the siege, became even gloomier in their outlook.

Hard battles lay ahead the following year, but Queen Victoria's soldiers at Sevastopol knew that they were capable of immense feats as their eventual victory in September 1855 proved.

Images: Alamy, Getty

BATTLE OF RORKE'S DRIFT

NATAL PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA 22 JANUARY 1879





The siege at Rorke's Drift, an isolated rural outpost on the Natal border with Zululand, came in the wake of one of the British Army's most shocking defeats – the massacre at Isandlwana, which unfolded on 22 January 1879.

At this time, Britain controlled two provinces in South Africa – the Cape and Natal – and in 1877 had annexed the Transvaal from Boer settlers, thereby inheriting a long-running border dispute with the Zulu kingdom. The British High Commissioner felt this increasingly powerful realm, united under King Cetshwayo kaMpande and with a fighting force approaching 40,000, posed a threat to his nascent confederacy of states, so he set about engineering a military conflict.

Bloody dawn at Isandlwana

On 11 January 1879, the British launched a pre-emptive strike at Zululand under the command of the experienced African campaigner Lieutenant-General Lord Chelmsford. He assembled three columns, taking command of the central column himself, which he proposed would bear the brunt of the fighting with the two flanking columns poised to provide support and prevent the Zulu army slipping past him.

Chelmsford's main column comprised regular infantry in the form of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 24th Regiment, along with a battery of seven-pounder field guns, a regiment of the indigenous Natal Native Contingent and a light cavalry troop that included a number of local volunteers.

On his way to Zululand, Chelmsford stopped at Rorke's Drift, once a farm

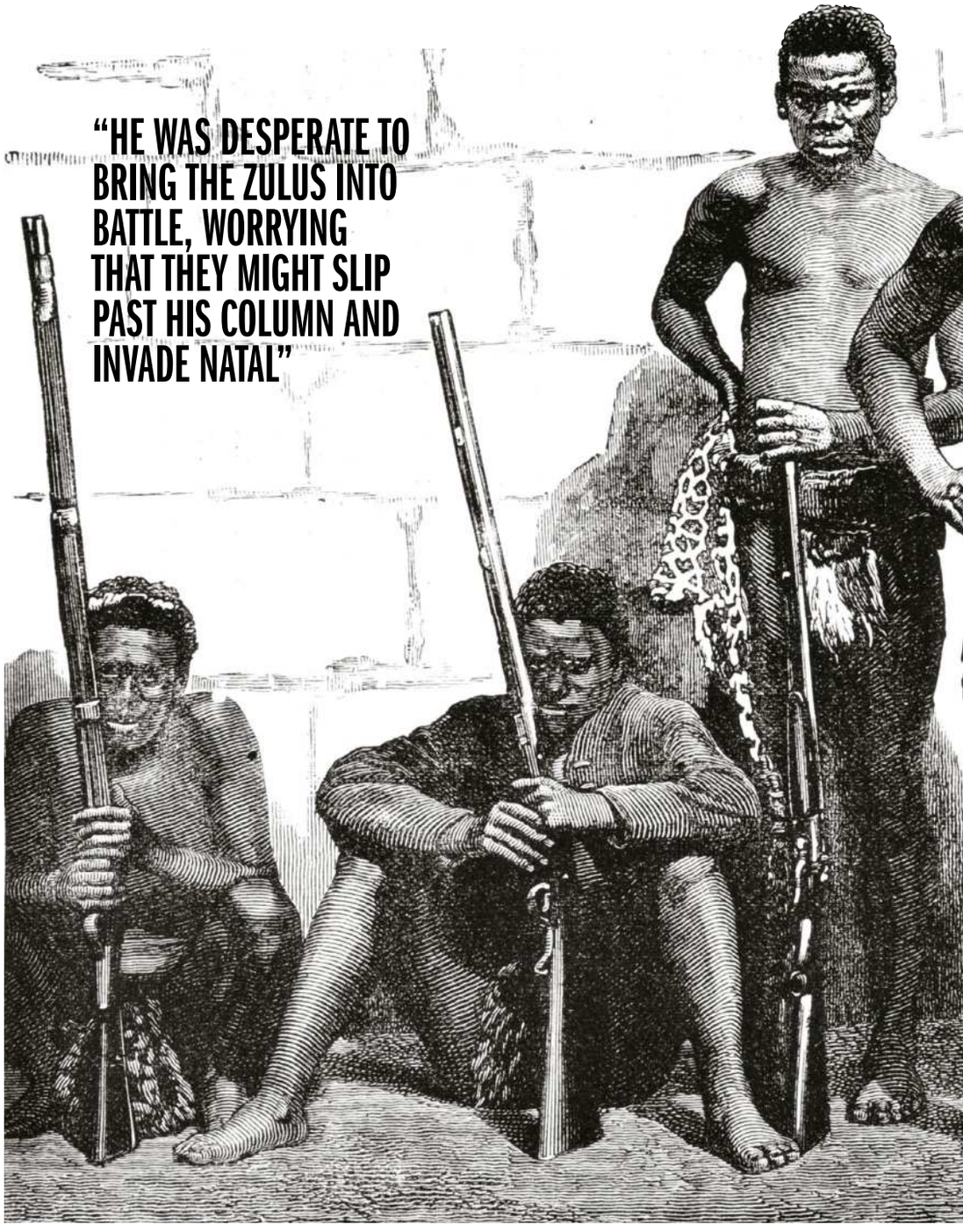
belonging to the intrepid pioneer Jim Rorke and latterly a Swedish missionary station. The post included two main buildings, a cookhouse and a pair of cattle corals, or kraals. One building Chelmsford pressed into service as a hospital, the other he transformed into a storehouse. He neglected to fortify the position, though he left a small garrison to man the post, from which he would provision his forces during the campaign.

His offensive began with the crossing of the Mzinyathi River from Rorke's Drift on the morning of 11 January. By 20 January, Chelmsford, struggling over rough terrain, had reached the sphinx-like rocky crest at Isandlwana, setting up camp on the forward slope. As at Rorke's Drift, he elected not to fortify his position, reasoning that he would not stay in the vicinity for very long. He was desperate to bring the Zulus into battle, worrying that they might slip past his column and invade Natal.

When his reconnaissance troops ran into a Zulu force that quickly melted away into the bush, this seemed to confirm his suspicions – the Zulus were avoiding battle. Resolute in his pursuit, Chelmsford decided to flush the army out. However, he didn't realise his men had encountered a skirmish unit and that the main Zulu army had already identified his position at Isandlwana. Unknown to the British commander, it was forming up in a valley just a few miles away.

Making a crucial mistake, Chelmsford split his force, leaving around 1,700 men behind while he sallied forth in a bid to locate the main Zulu army and force them into combat. While he was more than ten miles away, searching in vain for Cetshwayo, the main Zulu army readied itself for an assault on Isandlwana.

If properly arranged in defence of a fortified camp, the diminished British force would have stood an excellent chance of holding off the Zulu attack, but Chelmsford's negligence and the complacency of the officers still in camp left the British defenders in a perilous position. Believing that Chelmsford was out corralling the main Zulu army and that the warriors emerging in front of the British lines at Isandlwana formed only a small unit, the residing officers deployed their men in an open formation around a mile ahead of the main camp. They were confident that their firing arc, featuring the



"HE WAS DESPERATE TO BRING THE ZULUS INTO BATTLE, WORRYING THAT THEY MIGHT SLIP PAST HIS COLUMN AND INVADE NATAL"

THE HEROES OF RORKE'S DRIFT

ELEVEN VICTORIA CROSSES WERE AWARDED TO THE DEFENDERS AT RORKE'S DRIFT, INCLUDING...

LIEUTENANT JOHN CHARD



Age: 31

Commissioned into the Royal Engineers in 1868, Chard did not arrive at Rorke's Drift until three days before the battle. Left in temporary charge of the garrison by Major Spalding, he belied his lack of battle experience by organising the defences and showing great leadership.

LIEUTENANT GONVILLE BROMHEAD



Age: 33

Attaining his officer's commission three years after Chard, Bromhead was appointed second-in-command once Major Spalding had left Rorke's Drift, earning his VC by showing great gallantry throughout the defence. He was subsequently promoted to brevet Major.

JAMES DALTON



Age: 46

Having retired from the Army, Dalton had enrolled as Acting Assistant Commissary with the British Force and superintended the organisation of the defence. He was among those receiving the first wave of attack. Although wounded, he continued to engage in the action.

CORPORAL CHRISTIAN SCHIESS



Age: 22

An NCO in the Natal Native Contingent, his ill-fitting boots had forced him into the Rorke's Drift hospital, though he took a position on the perimeter once the defences were set. Despite taking a bullet to his foot and having his hat shot off, he dislodged several Zulus from a mealie bag barricade.

PRIVATE FREDERICK HITCH



Age: 22

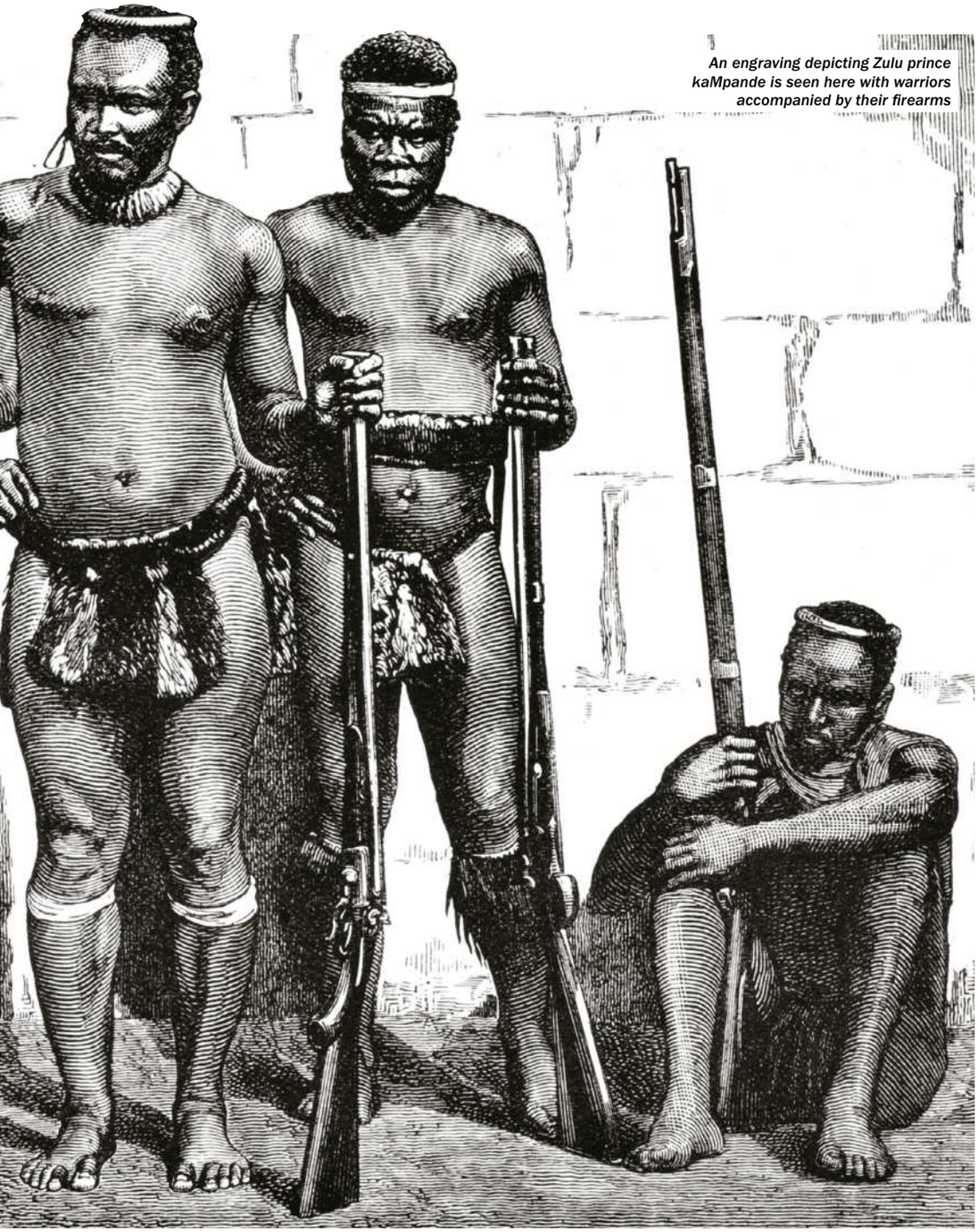
Alongside fellow VC winner Corporal Allen, Hitch kept communications at the hospital open, thereby allowing patients to be removed. Though wounded in the shoulder, he worked through the night, dispensing ammunition to his comrades before he finally collapsed.

PRIVATE HENRY HOOK



Age: 28

Fighting along with John Williams VC, he held out in the hospital for over an hour, fighting until his ammo ran out. As the Zulus advanced through the building, these two burst through three partition walls and helped eight patients out to safety.



An engraving depicting Zulu prince kaMpande is seen here with warriors accompanied by their firearms

MYTHS OF RORKE'S DRIFT

A NUMBER OF FALSITIES HAVE SPRUNG UP AROUND THIS LEGENDARY BATTLE, WITH MORE THAN A FEW PERPETUATED BY THE STIRRING 1964 FILM ZULU...

THE WELSH WON THE DAY

Though the film pitches the 24th Regt as Welsh, most of the defenders were in fact English. The regiment was based in Brecon in South Wales but, according to one source, 49 of the defenders at Rorke's Drift were English and just 14 were Welsh.

MEN OF HARLECH

A highlight in the 1964 film is the singing contest between the opposing forces in which the defenders belt out a rousing rendition of *Men Of Harlech.* This did not happen, though the sing-off constitutes a rousing and memorable piece of cinema.

THE ZULU SUICIDE BID

In another fantastic moment of cinema, the Zulu chief in the film sends out his men in a suicide mission to test the numbers of British rifles. This did not happen. It should also be noted that the Swedish missionary had already left his post prior to the attack and did not go mad. Neither was Pte Hook a drunkard.

THE ZULUS SALUTE THE DEFENDERS

A highlight in the film, no doubt, but the stirring moment when the retreating Zulus sing a salutary song to the beleaguered victors is a falsehood. War-torn and weary, the Zulu troops slunk away under cover of night, no doubt spurred on by Chelmsford's relief column arriving from Isandlwana.

ZULUS WITH MARTINI-HENRY RIFLES

The Zulus were definitely armed with rifles and muskets but they did not boast any of the new Martini-Henry rifles looted from the dead at Isandlwana. The Zulus fighting at Rorke's Drift had not engaged in the fighting earlier that day and therefore could not have picked up any of these powerful weapons.



***Right:** The Martini-Henry rifle was the formidable weapon available to the British garrison*

new Martini-Henry breech-loading rifles, would be strong enough to scatter the enemy.

However, this was no mere skirmish unit – it was a muster of 20,000 spear-brave warriors, the cream of Cetshwayo's fighting force, and they were ready to bathe their spears in the invaders' blood. Forming up in a traditional 'horns of the bull' formation, the Zulus outflanked the British line, overwhelming the defenders with sheer weight of numbers. The superior British firepower was rendered redundant and a slaughter ensued.

Garrison fortifications

The men garrisoned at Rorke's Drift heard the distant gunfire at Isandlwana and cursed their luck. Many of them would have preferred what they presumed was a glorious victory over in Zululand to the interminable boredom of camp life in their barren outpost. How quickly their opinions changed. A string of refugees from the massacre began filtering back to their position, many frantic with panic, leaving the officers in command with a decision to make. Should they defend the Drift or flee?

The decision fell to Lieutenant John Chard, who'd been appointed the commanding officer by the garrison chief, Major Spalding, in the wake of his departure earlier in the day to chivvy along a group of reinforcements that had failed to arrive. Lieutenant Chard was an engineer and had yet to see action, while his second in command, Lieutenant Gonville Bromhead, though possessed of some experience, had never shone in battle.

As they discussed options, a Commissariat officer, James Dalton, spoke up in favour of a defensive action, pointing out that with the wounded men from the hospital slowing them down, the Zulu force would overtake them and, out in the open, they'd have little chance. Chard agreed – they would make a stand.

The British troops soon got to work fortifying their position. The garrison was comprised of B Company from the 2nd Battalion of the 24th – usually containing 100 men, at Rorke's Drift B Company numbered only 95 men on duty. There were 30 wounded in the hospital, along with Surgeon Reynolds and three men from the Army Hospital Corps, and somewhere between 100-300 indigenous troops from the NNC with their white officers.

This force soon got the defences up and running; a barricade of biscuit boxes and mealie bags was run from a well-built stone kraal on the eastern edge of the camp along to the far western edge of the hospital. This barrier was around three-feet high and sat atop a ledge, giving the defenders a barrier that stood up to eight-feet tall all along the northern


COMMISSARIAT
NAVY BISC



This spirited, if romanticised, depiction of the battle by Alphonse de Neuville shows the garrison defence in vibrant detail

rim. A second barrier of mealie bags, which also incorporated two wagons, was run along the position's southern border, linking the hospital and the storehouse.

With upwards of 400 manning the barricades, the defences looked sound. The Zulu army consisted of light infantry, capable of swift manoeuvres out in the open, but with no artillery and inferior firearms they were ill placed to overrun a well-fortified position. However, around 4pm things took a turn for the worse.

The Zulu force arrives

A contingent of Natal Native Horse had come galloping up to Rorke's Drift, yet more fugitives from Isandlwana, but their white officer apologised to Chard, saying he could not control his men who had ignored their orders and rode off into the distance. Their departure demoralised the NNC troops who also deserted their positions. This left just 150 men to defend the entire post.

The defenders now faced a far more perilous situation, prompting Chard to construct an inner defensive wall – a biscuit-box barricade that ran in a northerly direction from the left edge of the storehouse to the northern barricade – in case his men could not hold the entire perimeter. The first Zulu contingents now came into view. Around 500 to 600 men from the iNuluyengwe Regiment arrived at roughly 4.30pm, moving in open formation from the south before charging the defenders.

Chard ordered the British to fire at 500 yards and though initially erratic, the Martini-Henry fusillade soon found its range and the first Zulu attack faltered, forcing the iNuluyengwe to veer off along the western rim towards the northerly approach. They ducked into cover in front of the hospital, while others swung to the east and tucked in behind the cookhouse and ovens, where they opened fire with their own rifles.

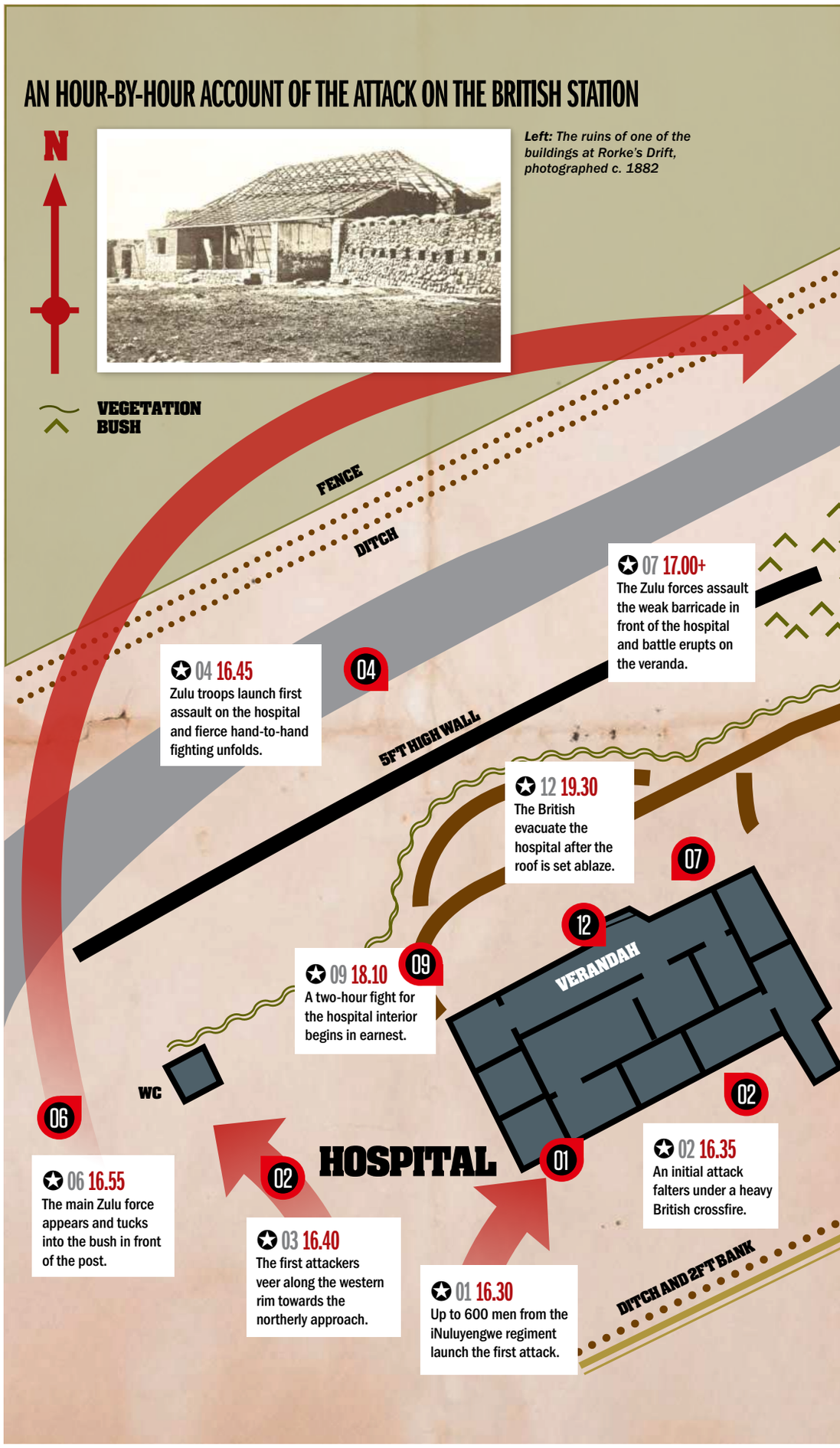
Before long the hospital came under attack. This was the station's weakest position as the troops had not been able to finish the barricade in front of the building, while the attackers were afforded good cover by long grass that ran right up to the British defences.

The Zulus suffered heavy fire, but were soon on the defenders, forcing them into hand-to-hand combat, where it was assegai versus bayonet. Here the defenders had the advantage of a longer reach and the first Zulu rush was hurled back by a bayonet counter-charge led by Bromhead himself.

Approaching 5pm, the main Zulu force appeared, numbering around 3,000 men under the command of Prince Dabulamanzi kaMpande. The majority of these warriors had acted as a reserve at Isandlwana and were now eager to earn their own share of war glory and loot. Snipers took up positions on Shiyane Hill to the south and opened fire on the British perimeter. Their weapons were out-dated and they lacked decent ammunition and powder, but their barrage took its toll and a number of defenders were hit. It's estimated that around one-third of the garrison's total losses came from sniper fire.

Fight for the hospital

With the main force in position, the Zulu army continued its assault on the north-facing front



***Left:** The ruins of one of the buildings at Rorke's Drift, photographed c. 1882*

ROUGH STONE KRAAL

10 18.15
As the Zulu line extends they launch serious assaults on the storehouse barricade.

10

WELL BUILT KRAAL

11

11 19.00
Zulus occupy parts of the kraal as the British are gradually forced back.

08 18.00
The British start to fall back to the inner biscuit-box barricade.

WALL OF MEALIE BAGS 3FT HIGH

08

BISCUIT BOXES

HEAP OF MEALIE BAGS

13

13 21.00
The fight continues after dark with the final major assault coming around 22.00.

DOOR ABOVE AND BELOW

COMMISSARIAT STORES

VERANDAH

WALL OF MEALIE BAGS 4FT HIGH

WAGONS

STEPS TO ATTIC DOOR

10

Rorke's Drift is located near to a ford in the Buffalo River

COOK HOUSE

OVEN

OVEN

05

2FT BANK

05 16.50
Zulu snipers take up a position on Shiyane Hill and open fire.



* Estimated timings

of Rorke's Drift and the battle around the hospital intensified, spilling onto the veranda. The Zulus sustained a constant volley of attacks and the British began to feel the pinch as the combatants came eyeball to eyeball, with the attackers desperately grabbing at the British muzzles and trying to rip them from the soldiers' hands.

During this second phase of combat, a number of individuals demonstrated extraordinary courage, not least Private Fred Hitch and the Commissariat officer, James Dalton, who according to Hitch was, "fearlessly exposing himself… cheering the men and using his own rifle most effectively." Lieutenants Chard and Bromhead, meanwhile, proved their mettle, constantly moving along the line, plugging gaps and reinforcing weak points in the defensive line.

Non-combatants like Surgeon Reynolds and Chaplain Smith showed great bravery, chivvying the men and distributing ammunition. Still, the pressure was beginning to take its toll and the casualties from the sniper fire on Shiyane Hill began to mount. At around 6pm Chard ordered his men to abandon the weak barricade in front of the hospital and retire to the inner biscuit-box barricade.

This was a sound strategic move, protecting the men from the sniper fire, while the inner biscuit-box barricade proved a formidable barrier. Nevertheless, the retreat left the hospital and the wounded men inside seriously exposed. It was now down to the patients and half a dozen able-bodied men to try and hold this now-isolated position. The hospital fight would emerge as one of the most famous engagements at Rorke's Drift.

As dusk fell, the Zulus launched yet another attack, hoping to catch the retreating British line on the hop while also bidding to take possession of the hospital building. During the retreat, or sometime after, Private Hitch was shot in the shoulder and Bromhead leapt to his aid, firing his revolver at a man poised to spear him. Bromhead exchanged weapons with the wounded Hitch who fought on with a revolver for as long as he could. He then ferried ammunition to the other men before finally passing out.

In the hospital, around 20 armed patients and the six able-bodied soldiers kept up a steady fire, shooting through the windows and firing-holes knocked into the outside wall. Such was the press of Zulu numbers, however, the besiegers were soon right outside the hospital walls, grabbing at the British rifles or else firing their own weapons through the exposed firing-holes. Here Private Joseph Williams is said

ZULU WARRIOR
THE AFRICAN FIGHTING FORCE



HEADDRESS
Warriors wore elaborate headdresses to identify with their battle groups.

ASSEGAI
This stabbing weapon was usually around 60cm long and was deadly in close combat.

BASIC CLOTHING
In the heat of the African day, only simple animal skins needed to be worn, with rarer skins being worn by the higher ranking Zulu warriors.

SHIELD
Made from cowhide, these were also used as weapons in their own right, and their colour also identified the warrior's regiment.





Lieutenant Chard pictured with his Victoria Cross

to have shot 14 of his enemies before he was finally overcome.

For all their bravery, the defenders could not repel the Zulus who, once massed outside the hospital, set fire to its thatched roof, sending plumes of reeking smoke rolling into the building and inviting the now famous words of Private Henry Hook: "We were pinned like rats in a hole."

Pinned or not, it was here that Hook demonstrated extreme courage, and ended up saving the lives of many of the sick men, emerging as the sole defender in one of the rooms after the other men had fled. Eventually, he too was forced to fall back as black smoke engulfed the room, forcing him to abandon an NNC patient who the Zulus speared to death.

In the next room, a furious fight ensued as assegai and bayonet clashed. Hook received a spear to the head, his helmet deflecting its killing power and leaving him with just a scalp wound. With only one door in or out of this room the defenders were in danger of being burned alive, so grabbed a pickaxe and forced a hole in the wall through which they escaped to the next room to start yet another ragged firefight.

Hook and his fellow defenders gradually worked their way eastward through the rooms and at one point had to break one patient's recently mended leg as they scrambled their way toward the final room in the building. Squashed into this space, they noted that the only escape route was a small window that opened into the yard, which had become a no-man's land now that the main British force had retreated behind the biscuit-box barricade.

If they remained in the building, they were doomed, so the able-bodied ferried the patients out through the window and into the yard where they had to crawl towards the safety of the biscuit-box barricade. One delirious patient refused to be moved and the defenders had to leave him to his fate.

Sunset and aftermath

Even as the battle raged inside the hospital, the Zulus had kept up a constant pressure on the cattle kraal, the storehouse and the biscuit-box barricade. At one point Corporal Christian Schiess, a NNC soldier who'd been in hospital before taking up a defensive position, took a bullet in the foot but still showed ferocious courage by abandoning the safety of the barricade to stand atop the wall and fire down on his assailants. When his hat was blown off by musket fire, he bent to retrieve it before bayoneting two men and shooting another dead.

The Zulu pressure was as intense as ever, as some brave warriors sought to fire the storehouse thatch and almost succeeded. One attacker was even shot down just as he lifted his torch. Once darkness fell, Assistant Commissary Walter Dunne formed a stack of spare mealie bags into a towering redoubt from which the defenders could fire down on their attackers.

Ordinarily, Zulus preferred not to fight after dark — a time of malevolent spiritual forces — yet their attacks continued with intensity even as the sun set. As they forced the defenders out of the stone kraal, the British were left holding on to a tiny portion of their original position. But the British, though exhausted, were not done yet and had luck on their side.

With the hospital now fully ablaze, the Zulu attackers were illuminated whenever they tried to move across the no-man's land inside the Rorke's Drift perimeter. Trooper Lugg of the Natal Mounted Police recalled that, "We poured bullets into them like hail. We could see them falling in scores." Still, the British could not hold out much longer. They had 20,000 rounds of ammunition at the battle's commencement – by the end, just 900 remained.

The final determined assaults came some time between 9-10pm, then the fighting finally abated. The last shots were fired at around 4am on the morning of 23 January. The Zulus had suffered terribly, with the British Martini-Henry weapons causing casualties estimated at up to 1,000 men. The British, meanwhile, lost just 15 men, with ten badly wounded, two of them mortally. It was a surprisingly small number – the thin red line had held firm.



The survivors of Rorke's Drift, photographed after the battle

THE AFTERMATH

THE TWO BATTLES ON 22 JANUARY PROVOKED A QUICK CONCLUSION TO THE ANGLO-ZULU WAR

Though the victory at Rorke's Drift did much to assuage the horror of the defeat at Isandlwana, it was not a strategically significant moment. Instead it demonstrated the efficacy of the British soldier if properly marshalled. Events of 22 January 1879 cost both sides dearly, though this proved harder to bear for King Cetshwayo's citizen army than it did for the Imperial British war machine. Though defeat at Isandlwana shattered Chelmsford's original invasion plan, he was granted fresh troops who pushed into Zululand. They scored a devastating victory against Cetshwayo's forces at the Battle of Kambula in March of the same year before winning the decisive Battle of Ulundi on 4 July. Cetshwayo was sent into exile and the Anglo-Zulu war had run its course.

"THE ZULUS HAD SUFFERED TERRIBLY, WITH THE BRITISH MARTINI-HENRY WEAPONS CAUSING CASUALTIES ESTIMATED AT UP TO 1,000 MEN"

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The World War I battle that's one of the bloodiest in human history

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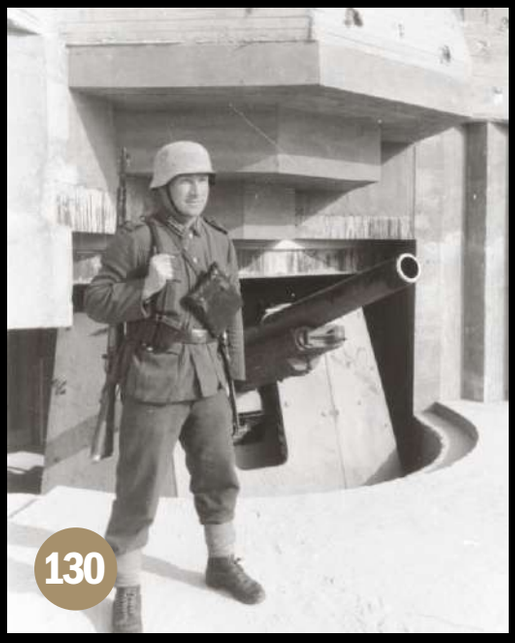








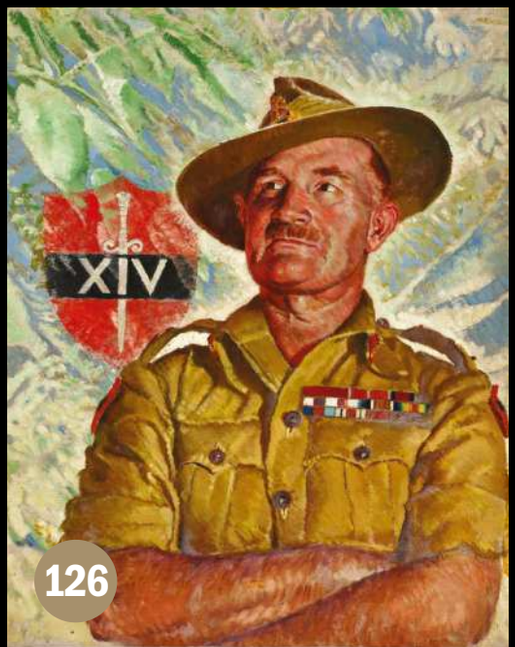

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XIV
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BATTLE OF THE SOMME

NORTHERN FRANCE

1 JULY – 18 NOVEMBER 1916

Morning on another warm summer's day on Northern France's front line was suddenly interrupted by a surge of explosions that seemed to make the very air pulsate. Detonations of explosives planted deep beneath the earth were the signal that the attack on the German lines was to begin. With shrill whistle blasts all along the line, the British and French troops headed out into no man's land, and the Somme offensive began.

Initially planned solely as a French attack, the Somme offensive was months in the making, and was intended to be Field Marshal Douglas Haig's decisive blow to the German lines. Haig's aim was to force a rapid and devastating advance on the German lines, breaking through the deadlock of the trenches and splitting the enemy's front irreconcilably in two. Not only was it thought that this would disorganise the German troops, but it could also draw away crucial enemy troops from the French battling a German offensive in nearby Verdun.

Haig devised his plans for the attack alongside General Sir Henry Rawlinson, who commanded the Fourth Army, which would form the bulk of the attack. Both men knew that the German defences would be well built up, so the miles of barbed wire, trench networks and bunker defences would be dealt with during an eight-day-long bombardment. It was thought this would be enough to cut the impassable wire, destroy the trench defences and crucially demoralise, if not completely obliterate, the German troops.

However, the German general Erich von Falkenhayn had made his order clear: not one foot of ground should be lost. This coupled with the substantial underground fortifications prepared over the preceding two years, using the chalky earth of the Somme region to burrow natural bunkers into the ground, meant the Germans were more than ready for the British. In fact, of the 1 million or more shells rained down across no man's land for eight days, many failed to even detonate.

When British and French troops ventured out towards the German lines at about 7.30am on 1 July, not only were the Germans waiting for them with machine guns ready, but miles and miles of wire still sat stuck in the mud in front of them. What was intended as a swift breakthrough and a hasty victory quickly turned into a battle of attrition. More than 20,000 British were killed on the first day, with many more wounded.

Over the following four months the men of the British and German Empires slogged it out doggedly. Every slight British gain was paid for with the lives of thousands, while even the first introduction of tanks to the battlefield in September was not enough to secure a firm and resounding victory. By mid-November, the last gasp of the British offensive resulted in the taking of Beaumont Hamel towards the left wing of the line – it had been one of Haig's day-one objectives.

With more than 1 million casualties from all sides, the Somme was a truly horrific loss to both armies, with only minimal successes. The objective of drawing German forces from the attack at Verdun had been achieved, but the essential and decisive breakthrough demanded by Haig had been a total failure. With December approaching, both sides were left with the winter to count their losses and dwell on one of the bloodiest and traumatic campaigns ever seen.





✪ BAYONETS FIXED

If any Germans remained to oppose the British troops, it was anticipated that much of the fighting would be up close and personal in the enemy trenches. The bayonet was a brutal stabbing weapon perfect for hand-to-hand combat.

✪ WALKING PACE

Soldiers were ordered to maintain a slow but steady pace, rather than a sprint and a charge, while attacking across no man's land. With heavy trenching tools in their packs, added to the need for a cohesive co-ordinated attack across miles of battlefield, the walking pace was deemed most effective.

✪ BARBED RECEPTION

Despite a mass bombardment over the eight days preceding the battle, the advancing troops found much of the barbed wire protecting the enemy lines still intact. This meant British and French troops had to cut their way through to the enemy while under heavy fire, and many became trapped in the coils of biting metal.

British Empire

TROOPS FOURTH ARMY, C.300,000

ARTILLERY C.1,800

TANKS 22 (WORKING)



Douglas Haig

LEADER

The dogged field marshal had a plan for the Somme, and was determined to see it through.

STRENGTHS His incorporation of new technology, as well as his formidable experience.

WEAKNESS Persistence with clearly failing tactics, resulting in huge casualties.



Mark I tank

KEY UNIT

These 'land ships' were a new and terrifying weapon on the battlefield.

STRENGTH Armour was impenetrable to normal gunfire, good for Allied morale.

WEAKNESS Slow, unreliable and impossible to manoeuvre flexibly.



18-pound artillery

KEY WEAPON

The workhorse of the British bombardment.

STRENGTHS Very good range and precise accuracy.

WEAKNESS Many of the shells fired did not detonate.

✪ 01 HEAVY BOMBARDMENT

In order to cut the barbed wire around the defences, as well as destroy trenches and crush German morale, British and French artillery pummels the enemy lines for eight days leading up to the day of the main offensive. More than 1,800 howitzers, field guns, trench mortars and heavy guns take part in this huge bombardment, however, unknown to the generals, much of the enemy wire remains intact and the Germans simply wait underground for the bombing to cease.

✪ 02 HAWTHORN REDOUBT DETONATES

At about 7.30am on 1 July, the main attack is begun with a series of mine detonations beneath the German lines. The largest of these is under the Hawthorn Redoubt, a German fortification, which is triggered ten minutes earlier than the rest. The 18 tons of explosive creates a crater 30 metres deep.

✪ 03 THE ADVANCE BEGINS

The British troops advance out of the trenches carrying with them their rifles, boards to cross the German trenches and heavy trenching tools. The Germans emerge from their bunkers and open fire with their machine guns on the advancing troops. The British attack is stalled, while to the south the French advance is more successful. With their bombardment beginning mere hours before the attack, the Germans are less prepared for the French sector's attack.

✪ 04 TRAGIC SLAUGHTER

The British army suffers 58,000 casualties during the first day of the battle, for the most part cut down by the well-prepared German machine guns. Few gains are made on this day, but the French 6th Army manages to take some of its first objectives, having been more successful in its opening advance.

✪ 05 GERMAN TRENCHES TAKEN

The first line of enemy trenches are taken by General Rawlinson's Fourth Army on 11 July, however, German reinforcements are soon on their way from the nearby Verdun front.

✪ 06 SLOW PROGRESS

The tough German commander Max von Gallwitz is put in command of the German front-line defence on 19 July and the reorganised German army is able to hamper British gains with counterattacks. Pozieres is taken by two Australian divisions on 23 July and by the end of the month the line has advanced, but few of the primary objectives have yet been taken.



✪ 10 THE OFFENSIVE COMES TO AN END

After the attack at Beaumont Hamel, the Somme campaign finally stutters to a halt on 18 November. With 620,000 estimated British and French casualties, and some 500,000 German, the lines have advanced only 12 kilometres.

✪ 09 FINAL ATTACK

With winter fast approaching, which would spell the end of any effective attacks, the last offensive effort of the Somme campaign sees the British advance on Beaumont Hamel, near the Ancre river. Beginning with artillery bombardments, the British Fifth Army attack on 13 November. In some areas, the attack is a great success, with many German prisoners taken, but the poor conditions soon take their toll on the British, and the attack is halted with only some of the initial objectives taken.

✪ 08 THE BRITISH CRAWL FORWARD

Over the next month, attacks at Morval, Thiepval Ridge, Ancre Heights and others achieve small gains into October, paying for each trench and each advance with heavy casualties on both sides. The French likewise advance their lines in the south.

✪ 07 TANK OFFENSIVE

Tanks are used for the first time in the Great War, during an attack on German lines spanning 12 kilometres on 15 September, at Flers-Courcelette. Only about 50 'land battleships' are available for use and several break down before even reaching the front line, leaving just 22 to rumble towards the German positions during this fresh push. Though many German soldiers are rattled by the sight of the tanks, the overall attack begins to falter and is halted on 22 September, with limited territorial gains.



German Empire

TROOPS 9 DIVISIONS, TOTALLING C.90,000



General Erich von Falkenhayn

LEADER

A seasoned soldier and politician with a mind for defence.
STRENGTH His preparations in building solid defences at the Somme battlefield.
WEAKNESS A determination to not concede any ground resulted in heavy German losses.



Machine-gun teams

KEY UNIT

Sending a deadly hail of bullets across the battlefield in very quick succession.
STRENGTH Devastating to the opposing infantry.
WEAKNESSES Hard to redeploy and would overheat with use.



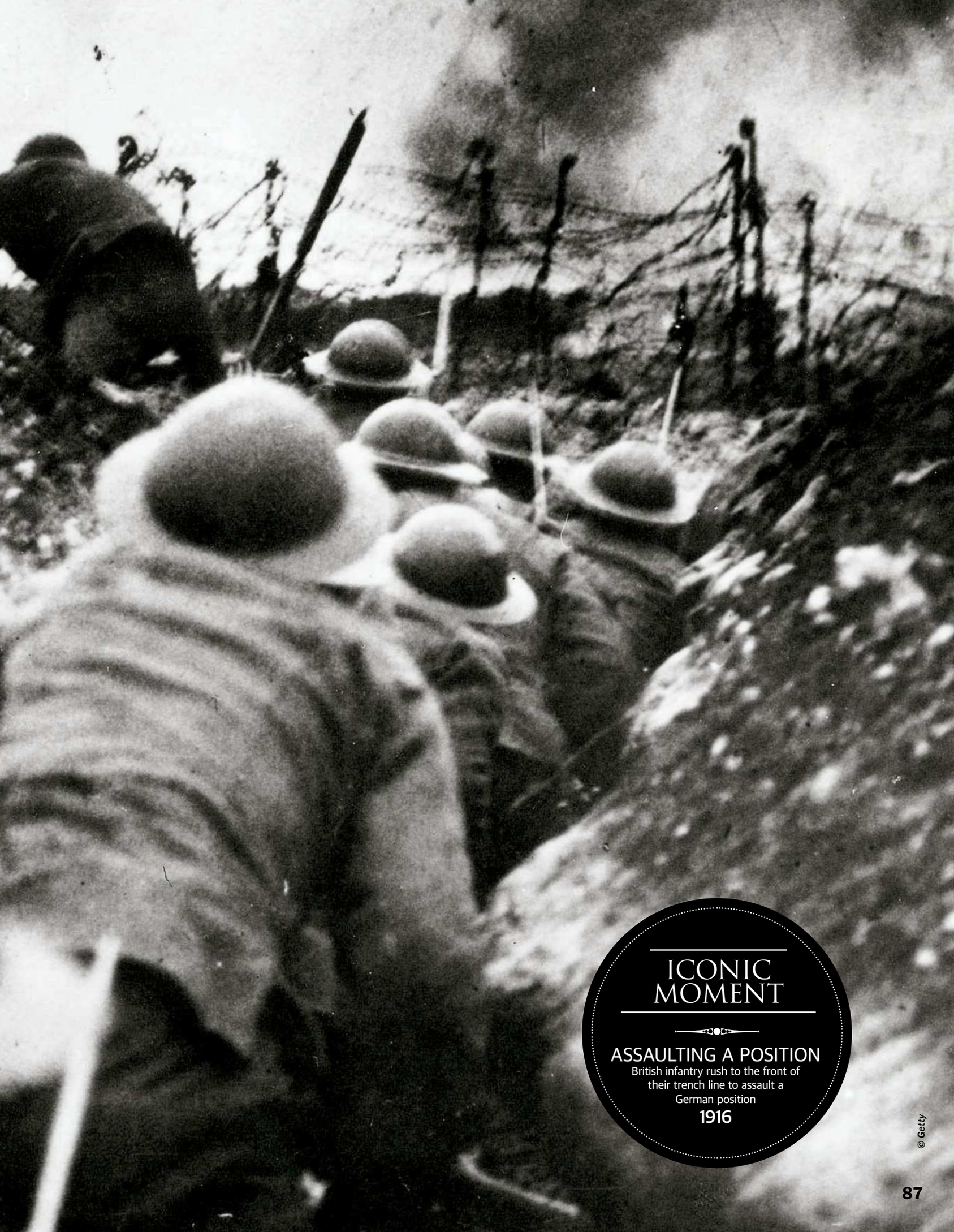
Gewehr 98 Carbine

KEY WEAPON

The staple weapon of the German army, ideal for the trench warfare of World War I.
STRENGTHS A five-round clip and accurate up to 2,000 metres.
WEAKNESS Long build of the barrel was unsuitable for close-quarters shooting.

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ICONIC MOMENT

ASSAULTING A POSITION

British infantry rush to the front of their trench line to assault a German position

1916

© Getty





ICONIC MOMENT

HOWITZERS

Eight-inch howitzers of the 39th Siege battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, shell positions near Fricourt

1916

© Alamy



ICONIC MOMENT

SURVEYING THE SCENE

A British soldier surveys the battlefield at Flers from a dug-out near the corpse of a German soldier

1916



© TopFoto



ICONIC MOMENT

CARIBOU MONUMENT

This bronze caribou monument was erected to honour the Canadian Newfoundland Regiment that was almost wiped out at Beaumont Hamel

1925



© Alamy

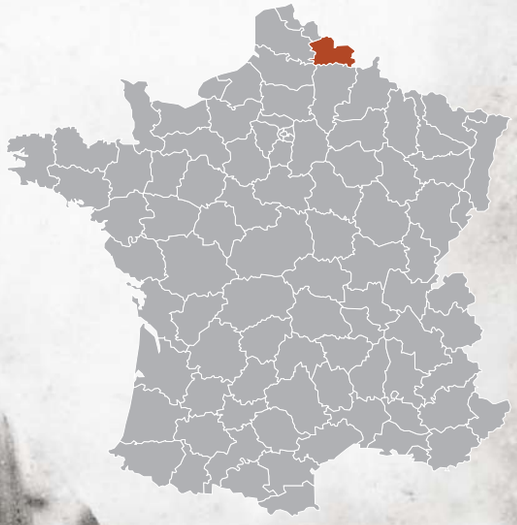


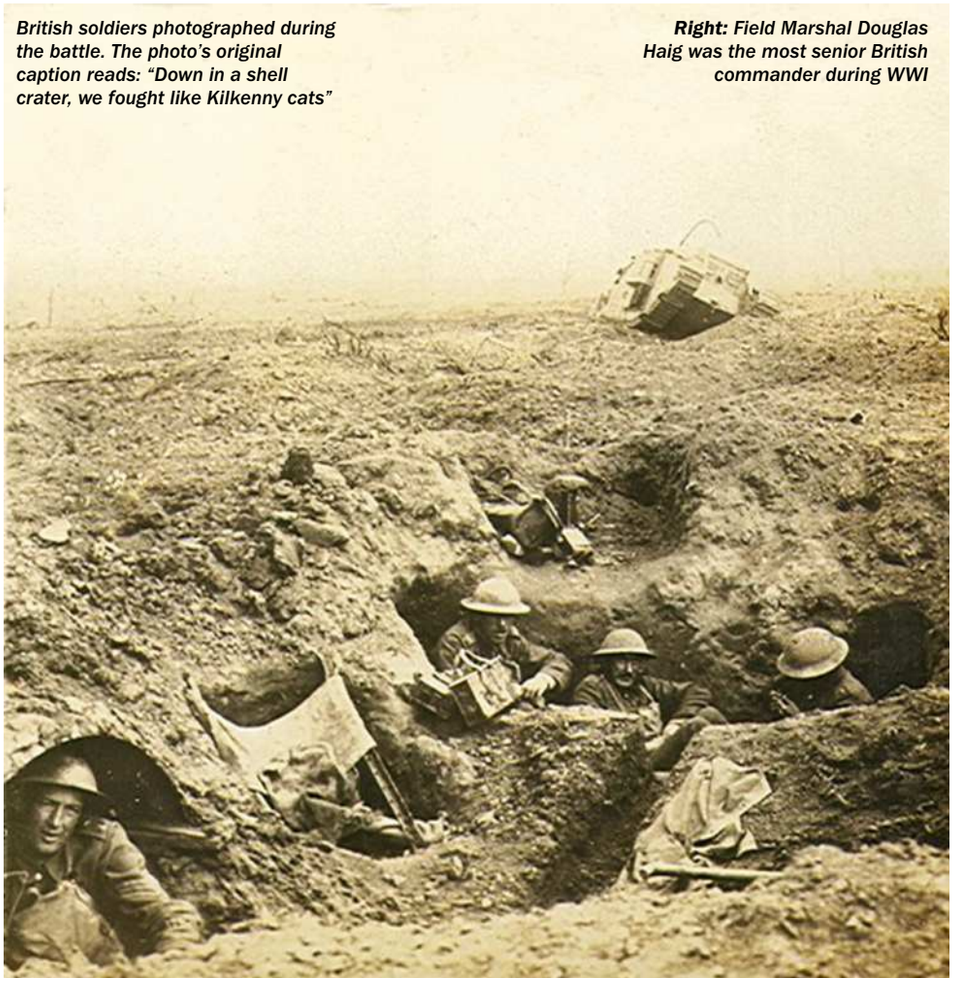
BATTLE OF CAMBRAI

CAMBRAI, FRANCE
20 NOVEMBER – 7 DECEMBER 1917

By 1917 the British Army's notions of war had changed entirely. Any romantic ideals of the glory of combat and the open battlefield had been trampled and drowned in the blood-drenched, rain-slicked mud and barbed wire of the trenches of the Somme. Men fought and died for yards that felt like inches. Three years of almost imperceptible movement in the fields of France had completely pulled the wool from British commanders' eyes.

With change so desperately needed, it's not surprising that the plan of attack at Cambrai was the product of ideas from three groups. British preliminary bombardment meant German forces were always alerted to the fact an attack was imminent, enabling a tactical retreat before a counter-attack. In August 1917, artillery commander Brigadier General Henry





British soldiers photographed during the battle. The photo's original caption reads: "Down in a shell crater, we fought like Kilkenny cats"

***Right:** Field Marshal Douglas Haig was the most senior British commander during WWI*



***Below:** General Julian Byng, commander of the British Third Army, pictured in April 1917*



Hugh Tudor proposed 'silent registration' of guns, bringing the artillery to the battlefield without alerting the enemy. This process would be greatly assisted by the use of the No.106 instantaneous fuses, which meant that shells would detonate immediately on impact.

Meanwhile, the Tank Corps' Brigadier General Hugh Elles and Lieutenant Colonel John Fuller were desperate for a chance to show their machines' worth. Fuller was convinced they would be capable of conducting lightning raids to smash resistance and drive the British line forward. This dovetailed neatly with Tudor's plan, as General Julian Byng, head of the Third Army, recognised. Byng turned his eye to Cambrai, a quiet area used by the Germans as supply point. While it was very well defended with the deep trenches of the Hindenburg Line and barbed wire, an attack would certainly be unexpected despite the area's strategic value.

With six infantry divisions, five cavalry divisions and nine tank battalions, more than 1,000 guns were mustered for the attack. There would be a front of around 10,000 yards, covered by the III and IV Corps of the Third Army, which would be widened as the attack progressed. The III Corps had to break the Masnières-Beaurevoir line, enabling the cavalry to circle around Cambrai and cut it off from reinforcements before 48 hours had passed. Obviously, secrecy was paramount.

The Mark IV tanks were divided into "male" and "female" groups, with the former having four Lewis guns and two six-pounder Hotchkiss naval guns. The latter were each fitted with six Lewis guns. Without the naval guns, the "female" tanks were lighter, at 26 tons, while the "males" weighed 28. The crews also noticed that while the males had a door at the back, the female tanks had doors closer to the ground that were harder to get out of in an emergency. Eight men shared the single space with the engine, while the machine was only capable of reaching a speed of 3.7mph, and more typically around 1mph over bad terrain.

The tanks would lead, providing cover for the infantry as they crushed the barbed wire effortlessly under their tracks. As for navigating the trenches, each tank carried a fascine – a bundle of wood and branches, which would be deposited into the trench in order to fill it, so that the vehicle could drive over it. Meanwhile, a grapnel was fitted to some of the tanks to enable them to drag away the crumpled wire as they went, so that the path was clear for the advancing cavalry.

Several things needed to go very right in order for this so-called "clockwork" battle to work. Haig had fallen victim to overreaching in previous campaigns and he was determined that the Cambrai offensive have limited objectives and stick to its time frame. Minimising losses was crucial – even more so when he was forced to send two divisions to support the Italian front. Co-operation and communication between the divisions was also vital, as the battle's events would prove.

The battle rumbles to life

The attack began at 6.20am on 20 November as the artillery began shelling. With this stunning overture, the tanks advanced into the fog. The gentle incline made things very easy for the drivers, while the infantry marvelled at the ease with which the tanks rolled over the barbed wire as they followed them into battle, as did the men inside.

The initial advance seemed to be going impossibly well. The "clockwork battle" was living up to its name as the Germans were taken completely by surprise by this sudden, shocking attack. The British artillery kept up a devastating rate of fire, as much as possible given the two-rounds-per-minute rule to avoid overheating. The advance was also supported by the Royal Flying Corps, whose targets were on the ground rather than in the air. As the pilots braved machine-gun fire to drop

"WITH SIX INFANTRY DIVISIONS, FIVE CAVALRY DIVISIONS AND NINE TANK BATTALIONS, MORE THAN 1,000 GUNS WERE MUSTERED FOR THE ATTACK"



Men from the 11th Leicester Regiment in a captured enemy trench at Ribecourt

their payloads, the weather worked against them. An Australian squadron pushed through punishingly thick fog at Havrincourt, barely able to see one another, let alone their targets. If their planes went down, they had to fight their way back to their lines, as Lieutenant Harry Taylor was forced to do, picking up the weapon of a fallen man and setting out to find support.

This isn't to say there was no resistance. A myth sprung up as the days went on about a German gunner who held the enemy at bay entirely by himself. That myth does a disservice to the determination and skill of the men who suddenly found themselves on the back foot. Some of the troops stationed near Cambrai had come from the Russian front and had never seen a tank before. It's impossible to know what these soldiers thought as the metal leviathans rolled towards them, but they fell back on their training, resisting where possible before making a tactical retreat.

Before long, communication began to prove an issue. When the tanks worked in tandem with the infantry, such as through Havrincourt and Graincourt, things went very smoothly. Elsewhere, infantrymen were forced to bang on the door of the tanks to get their attention, while confusion over objectives led to groups of infantry being forced to take key positions without artillery support. However, sitting in these slow-moving targets had its own terrors. They drew the bulk of enemy fire and if the engine gave out, whether due to attack, water in the fuel tank, or even a fire, the tank became



With extra weaponry attached, a 'male' Mark IV weighed up to 30 tons

a sitting duck. Once engaged in combat, the inside of the tank would become incredibly hot as the guns began to fire and the sound of their doing so was deafening. Visibility was shockingly poor, while the fact that most tanks had to stop in order to turn meant that they were a popular target on the battlefield.

Nevertheless, the speed with which they were taking ground was intoxicating; each trench taken and each line of wire cleared was another step towards the objective and morale had rarely been higher. As the tanks moved further away from their lines of reinforcement, establishing a clear road and lines of communication back became crucial. However, the supply mules proved nearly useless in the tangle of mud and wire, while the narrow roads quickly became clogged with traffic back and forth, ferrying wounded and prisoners.

The Third Army consolidates

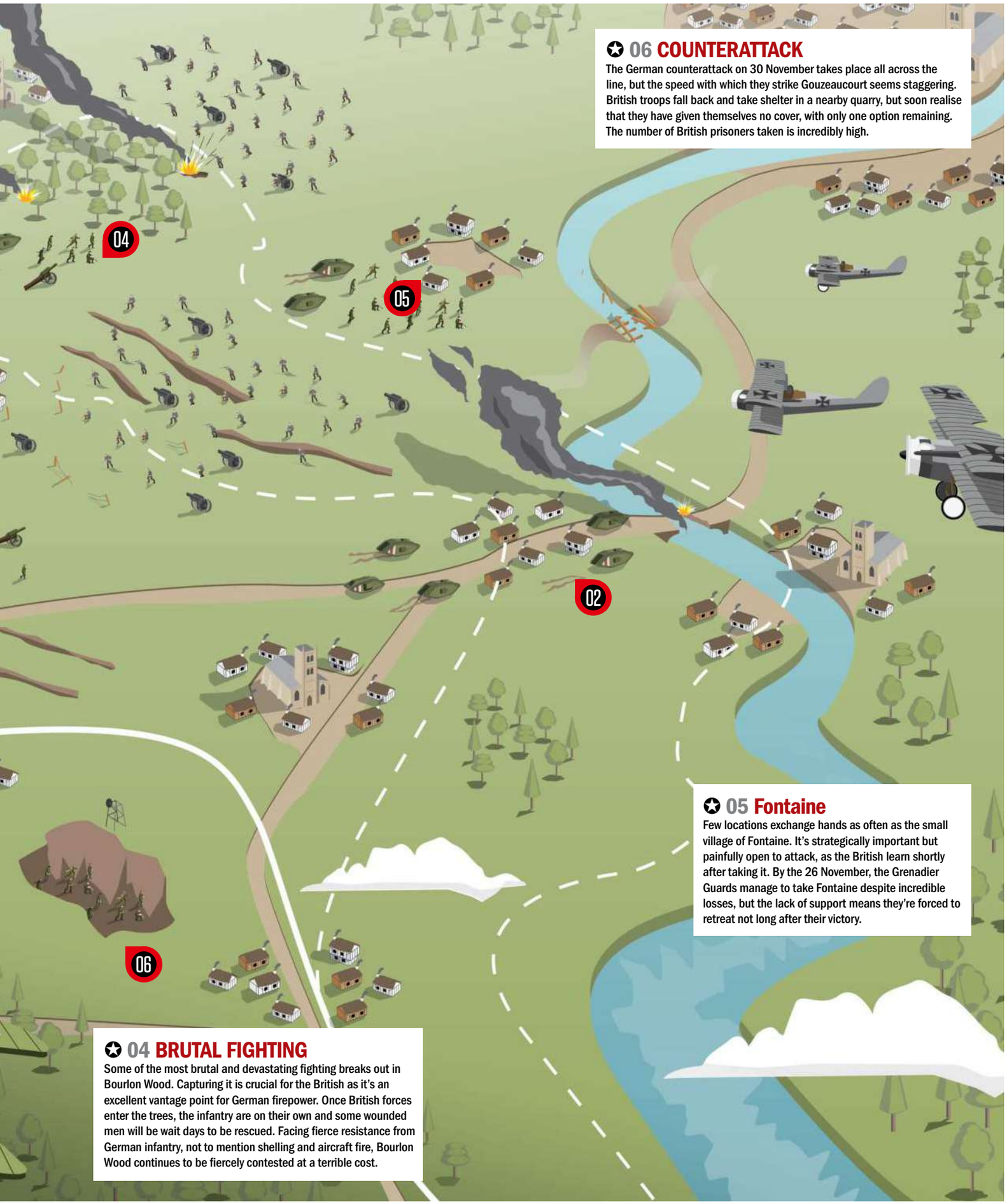
Despite the ground gained, the first day ended with major concerns. While crossing trenches had proved easy for the tanks, moving past the St Quentin Canal was another matter. A crucial bridge at Masnières had been crushed by a tank that had attempted to cross the canal, stopping the planned infantry advance, while another had been mined. The cavalry was delayed by the clogged roads, while a lack of communication meant they were stranded or forced to retreat. A lone squadron of Canadian cavalry realised it was the only unit to make it across the canal at Masnières and was forced to find its way back around and across.

Meanwhile, the key village of Flesquières had not been captured after the advancing tank divisions became separated from the infantry of the 51st (Highland) Division. With no infantry support, the tanks were target practice for the gunners at Flesquières ridge and suffered huge losses. Messengers from the battlefield, some of whom walked the two miles on foot, struggled to convince their commanders that Flesquières had not yet been captured.

OPPOSING FORCES

BRITISH	VS	GERMANS
LEADERS		**LEADERS**
Field Marshal Douglas Haig, General Julian Byng 2 Corps (6 divisions)		General Georg von der Marwitz, Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria
INFANTRY		**INFANTRY**
5 divisions 476 (378 fighting tanks)		1 Corps
PLANES		**PLANES**
14 squadrons, 4 divisions		Baron Manfred von Richtofen's Jagdgeschwader 1 (approx. 40 planes)
GAME CHANGERS		**GAME CHANGERS**
378 fighting tanks that enabled the British to move forward at an incredible rate on the first day of fighting.		The air force led by Baron Von Richtofen that arrived on the 23 November to combat the RFC and attack the British ground forces.





✪ 06 COUNTERATTACK

The German counterattack on 30 November takes place all across the line, but the speed with which they strike Gouzeaucourt seems staggering. British troops fall back and take shelter in a nearby quarry, but soon realise that they have given themselves no cover, with only one option remaining. The number of British prisoners taken is incredibly high.

✪ 05 Fontaine

Few locations exchange hands as often as the small village of Fontaine. It's strategically important but painfully open to attack, as the British learn shortly after taking it. By the 26 November, the Grenadier Guards manage to take Fontaine despite incredible losses, but the lack of support means they're forced to retreat not long after their victory.

✪ 04 BRUTAL FIGHTING

Some of the most brutal and devastating fighting breaks out in Bourlon Wood. Capturing it is crucial for the British as it's an excellent vantage point for German firepower. Once British forces enter the trees, the infantry are on their own and some wounded men will be wait days to be rescued. Facing fierce resistance from German infantry, not to mention shelling and aircraft fire, Bourlon Wood continues to be fiercely contested at a terrible cost.



Crucially, Major General George Montague Harper refused to commit any of the troops held in reserve to take the objective.

The second day required consolidation and advancement. Masnières was taken in the morning, but as a salient it was open to a punishing amount of shell and machine-gun fire, and the German air force soon reappeared to make life difficult for British troops. Meanwhile, the tanks had used all their improvised wooden fascine bridges on the first day, which made crossing the trenches difficult, and the infantry were reluctant to advance without them.

Things looked much better for the IV Corps, which advanced on Flesquières dreading the prospect of a prepared German resistance, only to find it had been abandoned. In contrast, while the cavalry helped take Cantaing, it struggled to work in tandem with the tanks as planned. Similarly, as the tanks moved into villages, it became clear they were not prepared for street fighting. With no machine gun on the top of the tank (it would be introduced in 1918), they were horribly vulnerable to fire from second-storey windows. Still, Fontaine was secured despite heavy losses, leaving Bourlon and its dense wood as the next target.

The offensive was on a knife edge without enough men to consolidate these gains.

"RUNNING FROM TREE TO TREE, WITH THE NOISE OF CEASELESS GUN FIRE, A HUGE NUMBER OF SOLDIERS WERE LOST"

Fontaine was incredibly vulnerable, but refused artillery support and destroyed bridges made moving supplies very difficult. Meanwhile, the German vantage points of Bourlon and Bourlon Wood posed a serious threat to the British. After a last-ditch effort ordered by Byng to push through, the order came to halt and dig in.

When Haig learned of the attack's successes and failures, he decided to junk the 48-hour time limit and continue the advance. He toured the battlefield, congratulating the men and helping to spread the myth of the lone German gunner at the Flesquières ridge, as that was surely a better explanation for the number of ruined British machines on the battlefield than the alternative. During this apparent lull on 22 November, German forces rushed Fontaine and retook it. Resistance was growing, and as the British dug in for the night in the miserable November cold they knew that their momentum was dripping away. Haig stressed to Byng that Bourlon and Fontaine must be captured by the end of 23 November.

Bitter fighting at Bourlon Wood

The fresh offensive was major, with 400 guns and 92 tanks, while the 40th Bantam Division was dispatched to relieve exhausted men at the front. The tanks met fierce resistance in Fontaine, and were forced to withdraw to the disapproval of Tanks Corps intelligence officer Captain Elliot Hotblack, who saw the effect their retreat had on the infantry's morale. Further down the line, German infantry made life hell for the tanks, finding the machine gunners' blind spots and throwing hand grenades inside, leaving the British soldiers trapped and burning.

Having reached Bourlon Wood with the help of the tanks, fighting through the thick wood was now the infantry's job alone. It was here that some of the most-intense and gruesome combat was seen. Running from tree to tree, with an unimaginable noise of ceaseless gun and artillery fire, a huge number of British soldiers were lost in Bourlon Wood.

When the German forces were finally pushed out, they started shelling it. Meanwhile, both Bourlon and Fontaine remained in German





***Above:** Tommies look on as British artillery arrives at Cambrai in December, 1917*

***Left:** German officers pose with a captured British tank in Cambrai. Hundreds of stranded or abandoned British machines were captured during the offensive*



***Right:** Manfred von Richtofen, known as 'The Red Baron', played a pivotal role from the air at Cambrai*

hands despite attempts in the afternoon, but the casualties on both sides were horrific. As night fell, troops were sent to support the men in Bourlon Wood as counter attacks from the Germans continued well into the night. Haig told Byng that Bourlon ridge simply must be taken, so the Guard division was summoned to support and relieve the depleted forces.

Throughout 24 November, shelling and counterattacks continued on Bourlon Wood. Poor weather made it difficult for RFC pilots to take to the skies and challenge the forces of the recently arrived Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Baron, whose planes rained fire on the wood. German efforts to grind down soldiers in the wood continued in the day. Counterattack met counterattack, and 25 November saw further terrible lapses in communication and bloody skirmishes. Battalions without tank support were mown down by machine-gun fire at Bourlon, while an entire cavalry regiment ordered to wait within sight of the German artillery was shelled. A furious Haig ordered the capture of Bourlon and Fontaine by the 27 November, as German forces continued to push at the exhausted British throughout the night.

A planned attack on 26 November was the cause of fierce argument between Major General Braithwaite, who bemoaned the lack of support and fresh troops, and Byng, who had his instructions from Haig. The attack went ahead, as Fontaine was taken at tremendous cost and targets in Bourlon Wood were reached. However, there was barely time to note the achievements before counterattacks drove the British forces back.

The German offensive

While skirmishes wore both sides down, the time had come for the major German counter-offensive after reinforcements had been arriving since the second day of the attack. Planned by Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, and widened by his superior General Erich Ludendorff, it was the first offensive planned against the British since 1915. Gas was fired into the wood two days before the attack, and at 6am on 30 November the assault began. Despite the warnings of some key officers, the British troops were simply not prepared for the assault at Gouzeaucourt, as German soldiers swarmed the British line and amassed prisoners. This was the first instance of the German stormtroop tactics, as the first wave of soldiers went around targets and cut them off as the further troops arrived.

As British soldiers realised what was happening, across all their lines, attempts were made to regroup and stand their ground as startled officers threw down their shaving kits and looked for their weapons. While German forces broke through in some places and were held up in others, communication broke down once again. There was simply no plan in place for this kind of counterattack, meaning that any attempts to fight back and reclaim ground were made on the hoof.

Much as the Germans had offered fierce resistance, so too now did the British. At Les Rues Vertes, the inspired and determined defensive tactics of Captain Robert Gee meant that their position and the brigade's ammunition dumps were held. He set up a Lewis gun, organised bombing raids against the attackers, killed two Germans who had infiltrated his position and killed the guards, before charging a German machine-gun post with his two pistols. While seeking medical attention he was forced to jump into a canal and swim to safety. His actions earned him the Victoria Cross.

As reinforcements arrived, the Guards Brigade retook Gouzeaucourt, while the forces in Bourlon Wood held determinedly to their positions. The conflict turned into a series of costly but unproductive skirmishes. As the days passed and the casualties mounted, Haig finally realised the necessity to fall back and form a line for the winter. He ordered a retreat on 3 December and by 7 December the lines had settled, with both sides having made considerable gains and losses in territory.

The British casualties numbered 44,207 killed, wounded or missing. The number of German losses has proved harder to calculate, with estimates ranging between 41,000 and 53,300. The battle has proven to be one of the most fertile grounds for myths of the First World War to form, but what is clear is that crucial lessons were learned in how important communication and co-operation between different divisions was.

A lack of support in reserve, a lack of communication, and that terrible desire to overreach led to the attack's failure. While it may have been the first large-scale tank offensive in the war, this landmark came at a terrible cost to both sides.

Corbis; Alamy; Ed Crooks; Thinkstock

BATTLE OF AMIENS

NORTHERN FRANCE 8-11 AUGUST 1918

By the summer of 1918, the German Army was, according to senior commander General Erich Ludendorff: "depressed down to Hell." The last great German offensive of World War I had ground to a halt that spring, while supply shortages and civil unrest at home seemed to conspire in a scenario of doom. For the Allies, American troops were finally reaching the battlefield in great numbers, bolstering efforts to bring the war to a victorious conclusion. Perhaps failing to grasp the enemy's desperate state, Allied commanders were preparing to carry the war into 1919.

The contending armies had fought for the town of Amiens, along the River Somme in northwestern France, virtually since the beginning of hostilities in 1914. Now, the Allies might push the enemy back from the important rail centre on the line to Paris, securing the transport artery for good. Overall Allied commander Field Marshal Ferdinand Foch endorsed the effort, and British General Henry Rawlinson, commander of the British Fourth Army took charge of the offensive. At his disposal, Rawlinson commanded 75,000 British, Canadian and Australian troops. American and French units were also slated to participate.

The British plan for the capture of Amiens appeared somewhat ambitious on the surface. Spearheads were expected to advance up to eight miles on the first day, substantially more than earlier operations had managed against stiff enemy resistance. Nevertheless, Rawlinson displayed keen command presence

✪ ACCURATE ARTILLERY

Smoke billows from burning buildings and areas receiving substantial artillery fire. During the fighting around Amiens, artillery accounted for a large number of casualties on both sides. In fact, field guns and heavy weapons caused most of the battle casualties suffered throughout World War I.

✪ ALLIED THRUST FORWARD

A long column of Australian troops and artillerymen deploys near the village of Villers-Bretonneux as the Battle of Amiens takes shape. The Allied offensive involved British, Australian, Canadian, French and American troops. Artist Septimus Power, a New Zealander, was employed by the Australian government to document the war.

"ON 8 AUGUST 1918, THE GERMAN ARMY LOST MORE TERRITORY THAN ON ANY OTHER DAY ON THE WESTERN FRONT"

and prepared for the offensive with innovation. Rather than a general artillery bombardment that would give the Germans early warning of the Allied advance, he ordered artillerymen to plot their targets on maps and initiate a creeping barrage to begin the operation. Further, his initiative brought together the first real combined arms offensive of the war, utilising aircraft, heavy guns and more than 500 tanks – the new and powerful weapons that could finally end years of arduous trench warfare. Perhaps most important, Rawlinson insisted on maintaining absolute secrecy, hoping to leverage the element of surprise. He also authorised the dispatch of phony communiqués to confuse the Germans as to Allied intentions.

The Allied offensive began on the morning of 8 August, as 900 guns opened fire at 4.20am. The Germans were unprepared for an attack of such magnitude, and rapidly began to lose unit cohesion. As British soldiers advanced, enemy troops began to surrender en masse. Less than an hour after the British stepped off, French troops moved forward to the south. Earlier American gains in the vicinity of Belleau Wood were exploited.

By midday on 8 August, Australian and Canadian troops had advanced five miles. The British pushed relentlessly through rougher terrain, but also made substantial gains. The front line was, according to plan, extended fully eight miles in roughly 24 hours. On 8 August 1918, the German Army lost more territory than on any other day on the Western Front. As darkness fell, Allied soldiers had inflicted 27,000 casualties and taken 12,000 prisoners. The Battle of Amiens ended three days later as Allied momentum slowed substantially and Rawlinson consolidated hard-won gains. By then, approximately 50,000 German soldiers had been captured. The stage was set for further offensive operations known as the 'Hundred Days Campaign', finally compelling Germany to surrender.

General Ludendorff called the decisive 8 August battle at Amiens "the black day of the German army."

✪ OBSERVATION BALLOONS ALOFT

Often heavily defended and ringed with anti-aircraft guns, observation balloons were deployed to provide intelligence on enemy dispositions, along with tethered barrage balloons floating above the battlefield of Amiens near Villers-Bretonneux. Both sides utilised barrage balloons to prevent low-flying enemy aircraft from strafing troop concentrations, dropping bombs and conducting reconnaissance missions.

✪ ARMOUR FORGES AHEAD

The gathering of British tanks during the Battle of Amiens was one of the largest concentrations of armoured fighting vehicles during World War I. Heavier Allied tanks took on enemy strongpoints and blasted breaches in German lines, while light tanks exploited breakthroughs, dashing towards enemy rear areas.

✪ ADVANCE ON VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

The last major German offensive of World War I in the spring of 1918 had been stopped short of the town of Amiens near Villers-Bretonneux. During the British-led advance that followed that summer, Villers-Bretonneux was again in the midst of savage fighting.

✪ HAULING HEAVY GUNS

Despite the continuing mechanisation of modern armies during World War I, opposing forces remained largely dependent on horses for the transportation of supplies and positioning of artillery. Such was the case at Amiens. Cavalry units continued to operate, even though technological advances in weaponry rapidly rendered their colourful charges obsolete.



British 4th Army

TROOPS 75,000
TANKS 532
AIRCRAFT 800
ARTILLERY 2,000



General Henry Rawlinson
LEADER

After learning hard lessons during the Battle of the Somme, Rawlinson displayed remarkable skill in planning and executing the Amiens attack.
STRENGTH: Superb organisational skills, particularly in combined arms tactics.
WEAKNESSES: Inability to sustain offensive momentum.



2nd Australian Division
KEY UNIT

Attacking alongside the 3rd Australian Division, these troops reached their early objective, the green line, by 7am.
STRENGTH: Veterans with a reputation as outstanding shock troops.
WEAKNESS: Minimal experience in combined operations involving armour.



Mark V Heavy Tank
KEY WEAPON

The Mark V 'Male' tank mounted two 6-pounder guns and four .303-inch machine guns; a 'Female' variant mounted six machine guns.
STRENGTHS: Armour protection and decisive firepower.
WEAKNESSES: Lack of speed and difficulty manoeuvring in unfavourable terrain.

✪ 01 POISED TO STRIKE

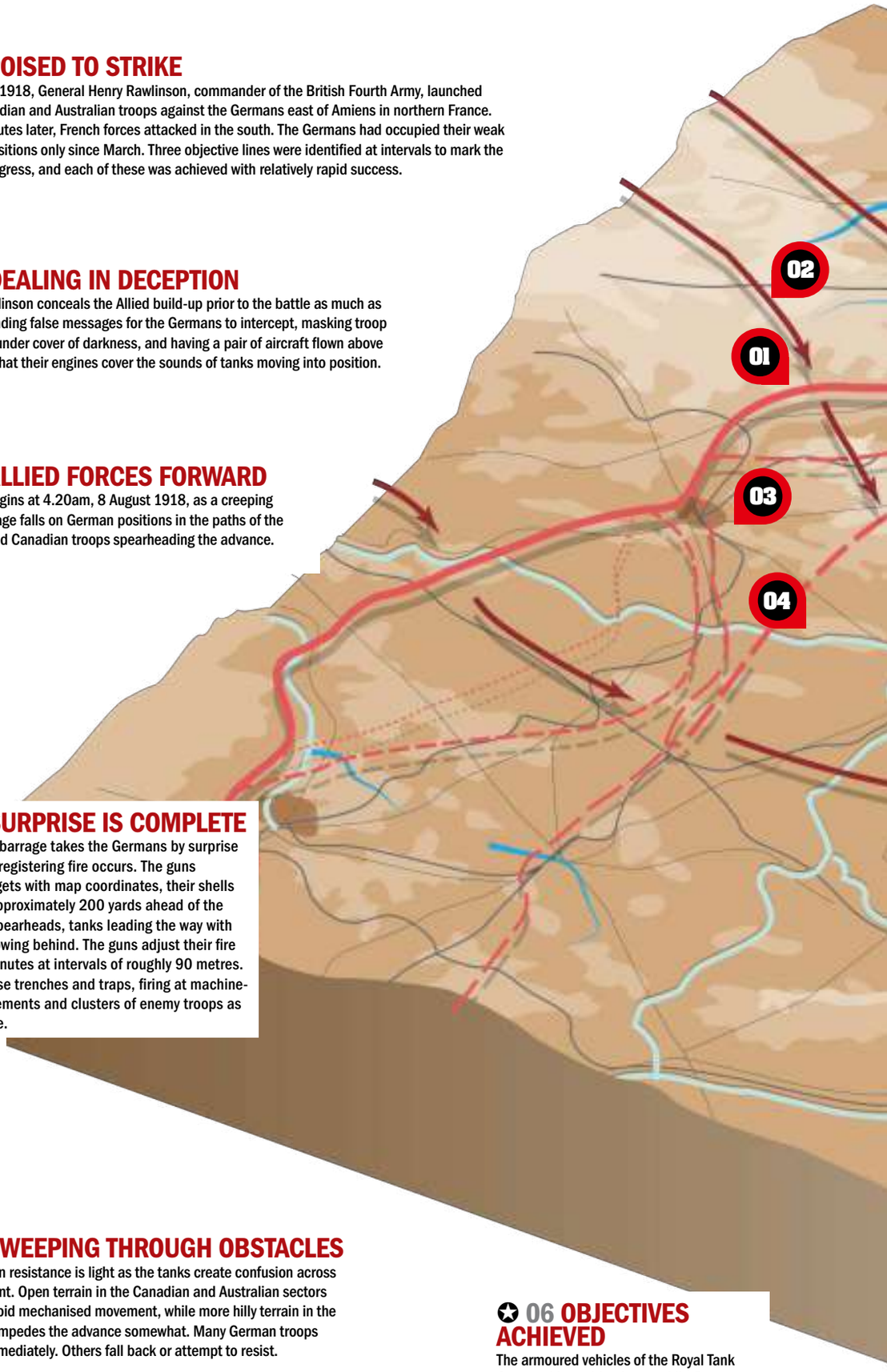
On 8 August 1918, General Henry Rawlinson, commander of the British Fourth Army, launched British, Canadian and Australian troops against the Germans east of Amiens in northern France. Then 45 minutes later, French forces attacked in the south. The Germans had occupied their weak defensive positions only since March. Three objective lines were identified at intervals to mark the assault's progress, and each of these was achieved with relatively rapid success.

✪ 02 DEALING IN DECEPTION

General Rawlinson conceals the Allied build-up prior to the battle as much as possible, sending false messages for the Germans to intercept, masking troop movements under cover of darkness, and having a pair of aircraft flown above the lines so that their engines cover the sounds of tanks moving into position.

✪ 03 ALLIED FORCES FORWARD

The battle begins at 4.20am, 8 August 1918, as a creeping artillery barrage falls on German positions in the paths of the Australian and Canadian troops spearheading the advance.



✪ 04 SURPRISE IS COMPLETE

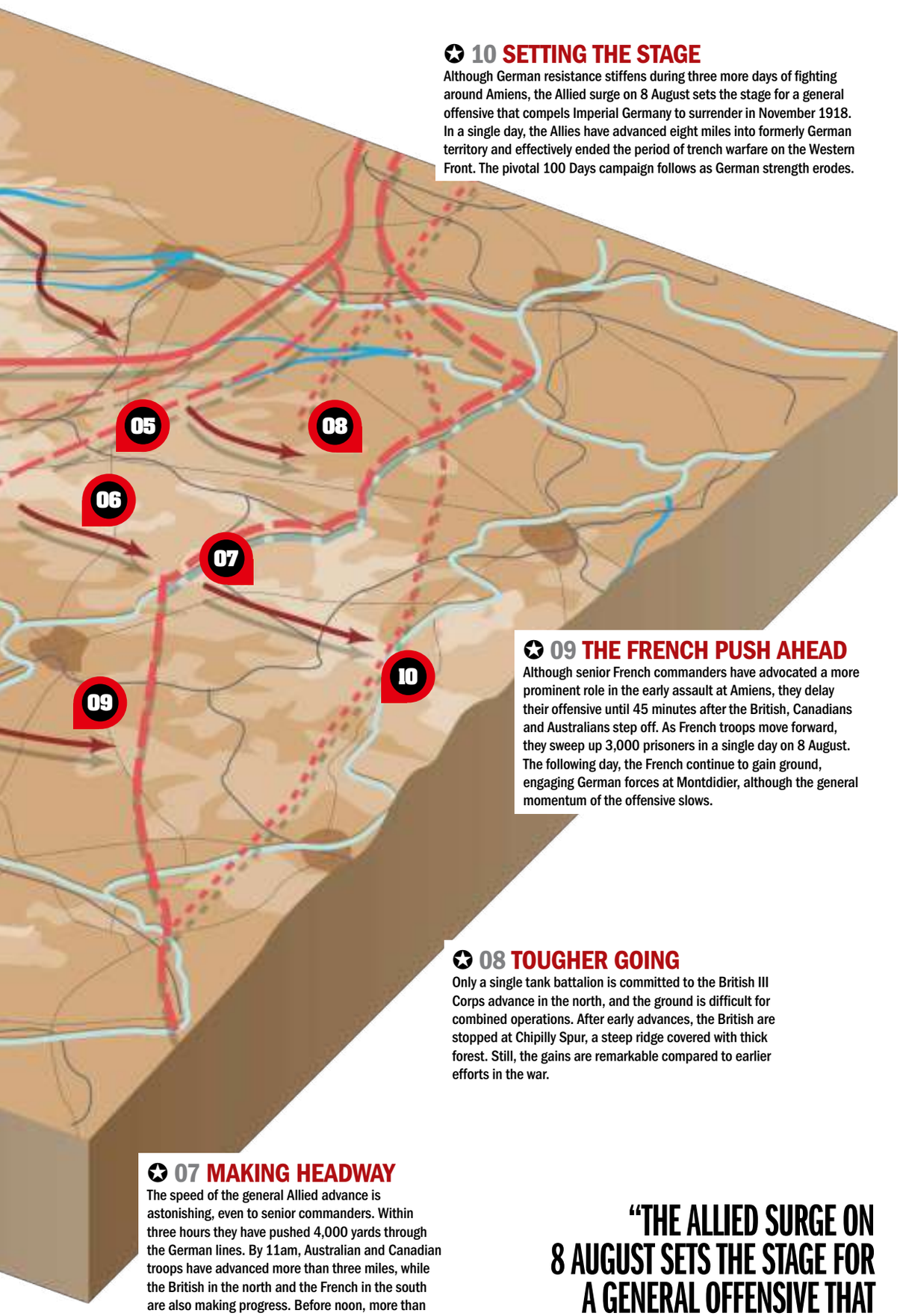
The artillery barrage takes the Germans by surprise since no preregistering fire occurs. The guns pinpoint targets with map coordinates, their shells remaining approximately 200 yards ahead of the advancing spearheads, tanks leading the way with infantry following behind. The guns adjust their fire every two minutes at intervals of roughly 90 metres. Tanks traverse trenches and traps, firing at machine-gun emplacements and clusters of enemy troops as they advance.

✪ 05 SWEEPING THROUGH OBSTACLES

Initial German resistance is light as the tanks create confusion across a 14-mile front. Open terrain in the Canadian and Australian sectors facilitates rapid mechanised movement, while more hilly terrain in the British area impedes the advance somewhat. Many German troops surrender immediately. Others fall back or attempt to resist.

✪ 06 OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED

The armoured vehicles of the Royal Tank Corps achieve objectives rapidly. By 7.30am, Canadian troops have cleared Germans from an area known as the 'Rifle Wood' or 'Dodo Wood'.



✪ 10 SETTING THE STAGE

Although German resistance stiffens during three more days of fighting around Amiens, the Allied surge on 8 August sets the stage for a general offensive that compels Imperial Germany to surrender in November 1918. In a single day, the Allies have advanced eight miles into formerly German territory and effectively ended the period of trench warfare on the Western Front. The pivotal 100 Days campaign follows as German strength erodes.

✪ 09 THE FRENCH PUSH AHEAD

Although senior French commanders have advocated a more prominent role in the early assault at Amiens, they delay their offensive until 45 minutes after the British, Canadians and Australians step off. As French troops move forward, they sweep up 3,000 prisoners in a single day on 8 August. The following day, the French continue to gain ground, engaging German forces at Montdidier, although the general momentum of the offensive slows.

✪ 08 TOUGHER GOING

Only a single tank battalion is committed to the British III Corps advance in the north, and the ground is difficult for combined operations. After early advances, the British are stopped at Chipilly Spur, a steep ridge covered with thick forest. Still, the gains are remarkable compared to earlier efforts in the war.

✪ 07 MAKING HEADWAY

The speed of the general Allied advance is astonishing, even to senior commanders. Within three hours they have pushed 4,000 yards through the German lines. By 11am, Australian and Canadian troops have advanced more than three miles, while the British in the north and the French in the south are also making progress. Before noon, more than 400 German guns have fallen into Allied hands and the number of prisoners grows steadily.

"THE ALLIED SURGE ON 8 AUGUST SETS THE STAGE FOR A GENERAL OFFENSIVE THAT COMPELS IMPERIAL GERMANY TO SURRENDER IN NOVEMBER 1918"



German 2nd Army

TROOPS 37,000
TANKS 0
AIRCRAFT 369
ARTILLERY 530



General Georg von der Marwitz

LEADER

General von der Marwitz faced a difficult task at Amiens with understrength divisions that had limited time to prepare defences.
STRENGTH: Experienced in combat command of large units.
WEAKNESS: Failure to detect the Allied build-up prior to the battle.



27th Division

KEY UNIT

Prior to Amiens, the 27th Division had fought at the Somme and Arras, and during the German spring offensive of 1918.
STRENGTH: Combat veterans with experience in both offensive and defensive operations.
WEAKNESS: Well understrength after numerous engagements and lack of replacements.



7.7cm FK 96 n.A.

KEY WEAPON

A widely used German field gun, direct fire from the FK 96 was an effective method of stopping Allied tanks.
STRENGTHS: Mobility and ease of deployment.
WEAKNESS: Limited range compared to similar Allied field guns.

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BATTLE OF MEGIDDO

PALESTINE, MIDDLE EAST
19-25 SEPTEMBER 1918

Fought across areas of present-day Israel, Syria and Jordan, the battle ground has been the scene of numerous other conflicts and is, according to the Bible, the location of the final battle between good and evil, Armageddon. In 1918, the action at Megiddo proved critical in knocking the Ottoman Empire out of World War I.

The Egyptian Expeditionary Force under command of General Sir Edmund Allenby had pushed forward to claim Jerusalem in December 1917. The German spring offensive of 1918 on the Western Front, however, pulled many of Allenby's experienced troops back to Europe. While replacements arrived, his force – consisting of British and Empire troops from Australia, New Zealand, India and South Africa, plus French and, significantly, Arab units – was not ready to advance again until September.

Opposing Allenby was German General Otto Liman von Sanders. He had successfully organised resistance at Gallipoli earlier in the war and was tasked with repeating the trick commanding Ottoman and German forces in Palestine. They were dug in across a line just south of Arsuf on the Mediterranean coast stretching to the northern tip of the Dead Sea, then east of the River Jordan to Amman on the Hejaz Railway. Yet von Sanders' men were in poor condition, weary and ill-provisioned. They were also heavily outnumbered.

In contrast, Allenby could call upon fit, well-supplied soldiers with superior weaponry. He had a massive cavalry advantage, something he planned to exploit to the full, plus two other military cards in play. The first was a loose, changing, yet nevertheless effective coalition of Arab tribes in revolt against their Ottoman overlords, marshalled by an Englishman attached to the intelligence section of the British Army, TE Lawrence. Allenby gave Lawrence money, arms and virtually a free hand to wage a guerrilla campaign of harassment and disruption with his highly mobile desert force. Frequently operating deep behind enemy lines, Lawrence's Arab irregulars particularly wrought havoc upon supply lines along the Hejaz Railway.

Allenby's second key advantage was air supremacy. The RAF, officially active from April 1918, ruled the skies over the region. It had better planes, and more of them, meaning enemy air reconnaissance of Allied forces was practically non-existent. Crucially, this allowed Allenby to mass forces on his left flank in secret. Troops only moved along the front at night, while there were some extraordinary ploys used to fool the enemy into thinking cavalry units were still in position in the Jordan Valley, where the Ottoman command believed the attack would come. Fake camps consisting of rows of dummy horses made of wood and canvas were set up. Even bivouac fires were lit at night in these fake camps, while mules pulling sleighs were walked continuously during the day to create dust clouds indicative of intense pre-attack activity.

Allenby's plan to utilise surprise, the speed of the cavalry and the bombing power of the RAF to augment his infantry had strong parallels to the Blitzkrieg tactics used by Nazi Germany at the beginning of World War II. The outcome was certainly as devastating, with Ottoman military power effectively destroyed in a matter of days. Boldly planned and effectively executed, the Megiddo offensive was one of the most decisive of World War I.



HORSEMEN ON THE MOVE
In what was to become the last great cavalry charge in warfare, Allenby's Desert Mounted Corps swept through the Ottoman line – torn apart by artillery and infantry – soon after the offensive began on 19 September. The open, unguarded Plains of Sharon and Esdraelon lay invitingly ahead.



✪ OBJECTIVE IN SIGHT

The 4th Cavalry Division cut through the Musmus Pass near the high mound of Megiddo to approach the strategic railway town, El Afule. At its head were the 2nd Lancers, an Indian unit, indicative of the international nature of the EEF. They came under fire – the first serious resistance encountered.

"ALLENBY GAVE LAWRENCE MONEY, ARMS AND VIRTUALLY A FREE HAND TO WAGE A GUERRILLA CAMPAIGN OF HARASSMENT AND DISRUPTION WITH HIS HIGHLY MOBILE DESERT FORCE"

✪ ROUTED

The Ottomans fought to hold the town, initially repelling a frontal attack. However, the static defenders were up against swiftly mobile adversaries. A looping charge brought a mounted squadron into the enemy's exposed flank. The resulting rout was symptomatic of the campaign – war-weary Ottomans outnumbered and outmanoeuvred by fresher opponents.

✪ DEFEAT ASSURED

With close to 50 enemy killed and over 450 captured, the cavalry pushed on to take El Afule barely 24 hours after riding through the enemy front line. Beisan followed shortly after, cutting off any northern retreat for the Ottoman armies in the Judean Hills, and effectively sealing their fate.



Allied Egyptian Expeditionary Force

TROOPS
57,000 INFANTRY
12,000 CAVALRY
ARTILLERY 550



General Sir Edmund Allenby
LEADER

Tall, imposing, tactically astute field commander, known as 'Bull'. Given the command after disagreement with Haig on the Western Front.
STRENGTHS: Visible, 'front-line' general able to control his international force.
WEAKNESS: An abrupt, brusque manner, possibly adopted to mask shyness.



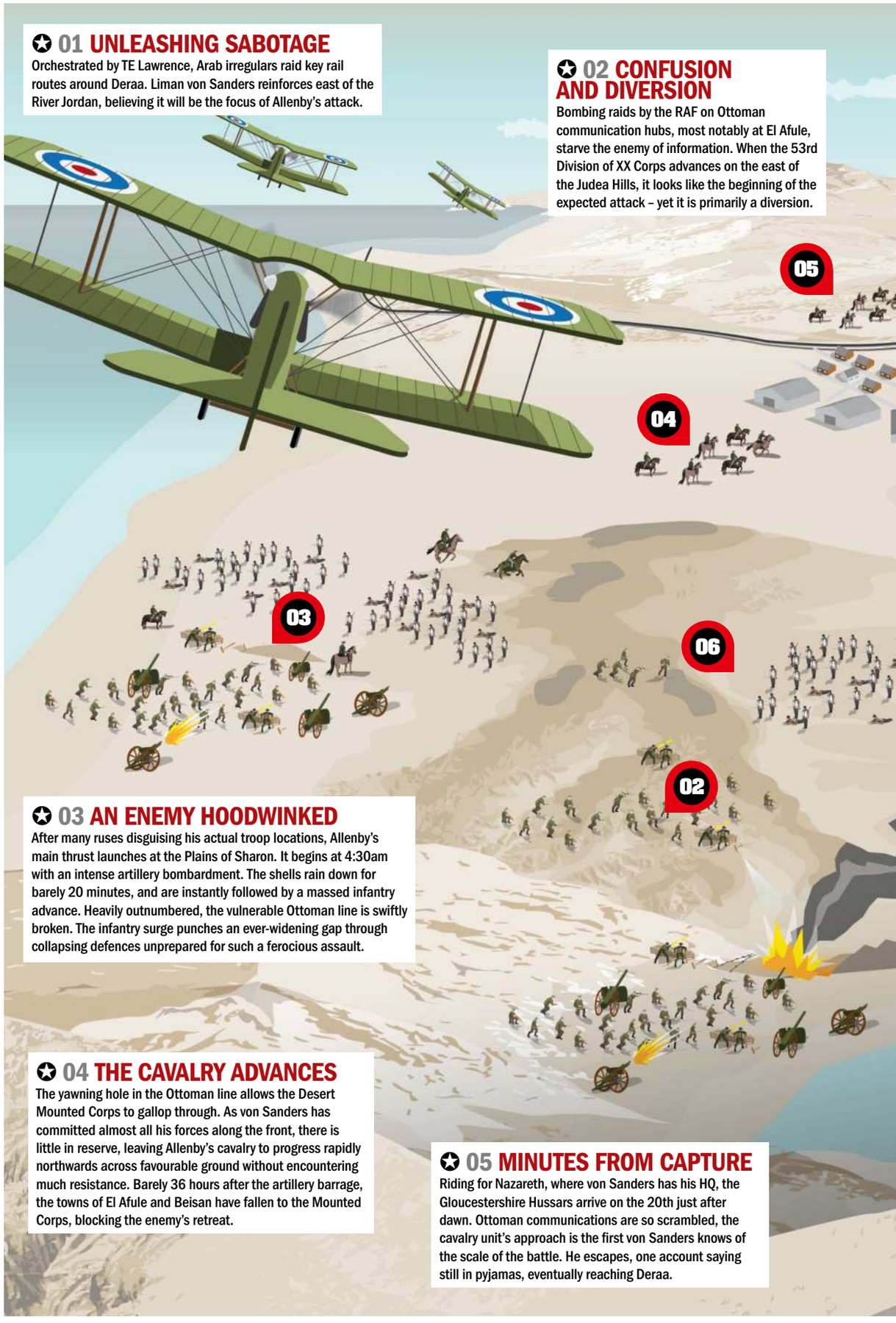
Palestine Brigade RAF
KEY UNIT

Consisting of British and Australian pilots who played a pivotal role in Allenby's attack plans.
STRENGTH: Possessed advanced flying machines of greater speed and climbing power.
WEAKNESS: Aviation was young – planes were as dangerous as the enemy.



Handley Page Heavy Bomber
KEY WEAPON

Twin-engined aircraft with massive wing-span. Lawrence's Arabs danced around it in joy when it arrived in their sector.
STRENGTHS: Powerful long-range biplane able to drop six 100lb (45kg) bombs.
WEAKNESS: Sheer size made it an easy target for enemy fire.





✪ 10 ENDGAME FOR THE OTTOMANS

The ragtag remnants of three routed armies fall back towards Damascus but there is no respite from the harrying allied pursuers. The city is captured on 1st October, a prelude to hostilities ceasing when the Armistice of Mudros is signed later that month, ending Ottoman involvement in World War I.

✪ 09 DERAA FALLS

A defensive stand at Deraa becomes impossible when its airstrip and German planes are wrecked by bombs from Allied aircraft. The town is abandoned to Arab rebels as the Ottomans flee.

✪ 08 ADVANCES EAST OF THE JORDAN

Major General Chaytor is tasked with protecting the Allied right flank. His mounted infantry force of some 11,000 men advance when it is clear that Ottoman communications are too disrupted to organise a counter-attack. Instead, the Ottoman 4th Army hastily retreats, ordered back by von Sanders to his new HQ at Deraa. While the disorganised withdrawal is harried by air strikes and Arab forces, Chaytor captures the key city of Amman.

10

09

07

✪ 07 CARNAGE ALONG THE ESCAPE ROUTE

Following its initial move, the 53rd Division redeploys to block any eastern Ottoman retreat, but stiff resistance prevents it reaching the Wadi Fara, a route into the Jordan Valley. Mustafa Kemal's force rushes down the narrow gorge, but is seen from above. Allied aircraft bomb and machine-gun the column. Rapidly wrecked vehicles and wagons totally block the road. A massacre ensues, with even some of the aircrews unnerved by the butchery.

08

01

✪ 06 THE 8TH ARMY DISINTEGRATES

The Allied infantry continues to advance on the Ottoman 8th Army, while its northerly retreat route is blocked by the rapid cavalry advance. Practically encircled, it is further harried by RAF raids. With many men killed, captured or fleeing the battlefield, effective resistance subsides, leaving the 7th Army commanded by Mustafa Kemal (the future Turkish leader) desperately exposed. There is one avenue of retreat – east into the Jordan Valley.



Ottoman Yildirim Army Group

TROOPS
32,000 INFANTRY
2,000 CAVALRY
ARTILLERY 400



General Otto Liman von Sanders

LEADER

Prussian military careerist who helped to revamp Ottoman armed forces after their setbacks during the Balkan Wars.
STRENGTH: Success in defending Gallipoli engendered confidence in his methods.
WEAKNESS: Committed forces to his front line, leaving little in reserve.



Asia Corps

KEY UNIT

Combined German and Ottoman unit, which offered stiff rearguard resistance at Samakh on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.
STRENGTH: Fought determinedly to hold up Allied advances beyond the town.
WEAKNESS: Lack of numbers, inevitably resulting in being overwhelmed.



MG08 machine gun

KEY WEAPON

A water-cooled, short barrel recoil machine gun unleashing 500 rounds per minute from 250-round fabric belts.
STRENGTH: Rapid firing in the face of a cavalry charge.
WEAKNESS: Of little use once the fighting became hand-to-hand.



BATTLE OF BRITAIN

ENGLAND JULY-OCTOBER 1940

The Nazi conquest of France and the Low Countries was swift and decisive. In a matter of weeks, the British Expeditionary Force had been ejected from the European continent at Dunkirk and Adolf Hitler stood on the brink of total victory in World War II.

Roosevelt sought to rectify these problems with a range of domestic programs called the New Deal. It focused on what were known as the 'three Rs', relief, recovery and reform. Relief was the immediate action that was taken to halt further economic failure. Recovery saw temporary programs implemented to restart consumer spending and reform saw more permanent programmes put in place to avoid another crash and safeguard savings. With these actions the American people began to see hope in the new Democratic Party. The Republicans under Hoover had said the worst was over and only hard work and determination would see the United States through, but these had actually turned out to be either lies or woeful predictions.

One significant challenge remained in the West, however. As German troops paraded down the Champs Elysées in Paris, Hitler and his generals contemplated the invasion of Great Britain, the island nation that now stood alone against the Nazi juggernaut in the summer of 1940. For Britain, the situation was grave.

On 18th June, Prime Minister Winston Churchill addressed the House of Commons with a warning that the Battle of France was over and the Battle of Britain was about to begin. "Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties," he intoned, "and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'"

German troops and tanks were poised along the coastline of France. Officers gazed across the English Channel at the white cliffs of Dover, a scant 20 miles distant. Hitler and his senior commanders knew that the invasion and conquest of Great Britain would be their sternest challenge to date. However, they were brimming with confidence as they planned Operation Sea Lion, marshalling barges from Germany and across occupied Europe to ferry combat troops to Britain's shores and considering the prospects for holding the might of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force at bay.

One fact was plain. Soldiers could not cross the Channel without the threat of air attack and Britain's naval might could not be restrained until the Luftwaffe owned the skies over land and sea. Control of the air was a prerequisite to any successful invasion, and Reich Marshal Hermann Göring, chief of the Luftwaffe, assured Hitler that his fighters and bombers would sweep the RAF aside within a few weeks.

Göring gathered more than 1,200 Messerschmitt Me-109 and twin-engine Me-110 fighters and 1,300 bombers for the air assault. The nimble Me-109 was heavily armed and fast; however, fuel consumption as German squadrons flew from bases located from Norway to the Cotentin Peninsula restricted actual time over Britain and the Channel to only about 20 minutes during a typical sortie. The Luftwaffe bombers included a mixed bag of Heinkel He-111, Dornier Do-17, and Junkers Ju-88 aircraft capable of carrying only relatively light bomb loads. The Junkers Ju-87 Stuka dive bomber, a terror weapon that had been effective as flying artillery during the German Army's blitzkrieg across Europe, was quickly proven unsuited for a sustained bombing campaign. So many of the lumbering Stukas were lost to Royal Air Force fighters that the planes were quickly withdrawn from combat.



Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory led the Big Wing faction of the RAF and later commanded Allied air forces during the 1944 Normandy invasion

Opposing the vaunted Luftwaffe, the RAF mustered roughly 700 frontline Hawker Hurricane and Supermarine Spitfire fighters along with other somewhat obsolescent types under the control of RAF Fighter Command led by Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding. The Hurricane was slower than the Spitfire, so a cooperative tactic effectively emerged. While the Hurricanes primarily targeted the bomber formations, the sleek, powerful Spitfires matched up with the Me-109s in epic dogfights that have come to symbolize the desperation, heroism, and sacrifice of the RAF during the Battle of Britain.

Defending air and island

As the threat of invasion loomed, British air defence preparations were admirable. Fighter Command was divided into four defensive sectors, and group headquarters were established to dispense real-time intelligence as Luftwaffe air raids materialized. Headquartered at Uxbridge, Middlesex, No. 11 Group defended London and southeastern England and bore the brunt of the Nazi air onslaught. Number 12 Group at Watnall, Nottinghamshire, defended Wales and the Midlands, while No. 10 Group covered southwestern England and No. 13 Group was

TIMELINE

1940

● Miracle at Dunkirk
The evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force, the bulk of British troops on the continent of Europe, and other Allied soldiers is completed at the port of Dunkirk.
4 June

● The Battle begins
The first engagements of the Battle of Britain occur as Luftwaffe planes attack shipping in the English Channel and draw RAF fighters into the air.
10 July

● The Greatest Day
RAF fighters claim 75 German planes and lose 30 to enemy fighters while defending against heavy bombing raids on their precious airfields.
15 August

● Bringing bomber pilots
RAF Fighter Command calls for Bomber Command pilots to transfer in order to make good the losses sustained thus far in heavy air combat.
17 August

● The Hardest Day
Called Black Thursday by the Germans, both sides lose heavily during continuous air battles. Losses among Stuka dive bombers are so severe that the planes are withdrawn from combat.
18 August

● Errant bombing
Apparently off course, Luftwaffe bombers drop their deadly cargoes on London, hitting the centre of the city, residential areas, factories, and the docks of the East End.
24 August



Der Adlertag
13 August 1940
On Eagle Day, the Luftwaffe stages large-scale raids against targets in England, including radar stations and airfields. RAF fighters shoot down 46 German planes.

RIVALRY IN THE SKIES

Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding is rightly given the lion's share of credit for the RAF victory in the Battle of Britain. However, for Dowding it came at personal cost. In the midst of the fighting, a difference in tactical perspective emerged within the highest echelons of the RAF. Dowding pursued a Fabian strategy, avoiding major air battles that might cripple Fighter Command beyond repair. Meanwhile, another RAF faction, the Big Wing advocates, championed large, set-piece encounters with the Luftwaffe. While Dowding was supported by Air Vice Marshal Keith Park of No. 11 Group, their opponents were powerful, including Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory of No. 12 Group. The debate rages, but on 24th November, leadership of Fighter Command passed to Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sholto Douglas, a Big Wing supporter.



Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding, who won the battle but lost the command due to tactical disagreements

charged with the defence of Scotland and northern England.

As the Battle of Britain developed, the RAF came to fully appreciate the value of a new early warning device called radar. A system of radar posts called Chain Home effectively eliminated any hope the Germans had in the element of surprise. Even while under direct Luftwaffe attack, the most sophisticated radar network in the world continued to function.

The battle joined

Hitler shared Reich Marshal Göring's optimism for an easy aerial victory and issued Directive No. 16 tentatively scheduling Operation Sea Lion for 15th August 1940, just over a month after the effort to eradicate the RAF was undertaken. The Germans referred to the opening phase of the Battle of Britain as Kanalkampf, or the Channel Battle. The earliest targets of the Luftwaffe air offensive were shipping and barge traffic in the English Channel, port facilities at Dover and other harbours on the southeastern coast of England, and aircraft manufacturing facilities.

Marauding German bombers sank numerous British merchant ships during more than a month of Kanalkampf raids, and the Royal Navy relocated most of its ships and personnel westward from Dover to Portsmouth. On 25th July, Stukas ravaged a convoy transporting coal. When RAF fighters intervened, the Germans lost 16 aircraft and the British seven. Two weeks later, German bombers sank four ships and damaged six others in a 20-ship convoy. RAF fighters shot down 31 German planes but lost 19 of their own.

At first, the Admiralty directed that all convoys embark only at night, but subsequently the decision was made to discontinue Channel convoys and transport cargo by rail as much as possible. Still, despite pitched dogfights and daily encounters, the Luftwaffe failed to sufficiently erode the defensive strength of the RAF.

Der adlertag

Round two of the preparation for the invasion of England was postponed several times due to poor flying weather. Finally, 13th August 1940 was designated as Der Adlertag, or Eagle Day. The objective of the renewed Luftwaffe offensive was the destruction of RAF Fighter Command during days of unrelenting air combat. Still confident of victory, Luftwaffe pilots often sang a jaunty tune with the lyric, "Wir fliegen gegen England," or "We are flying against England."



"To so few"
20 August 1940
Prime Minister Winston Churchill tells the House of Commons, "Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few."

Although the Germans were aware that Chain Home radar stations provided the RAF, particularly Air Vice Marshal Keith Park's No. 11 Group, with a measure of early warning, they did not fully grasp the significance of the network in RAF fighter deployment and readiness to defend against air raids. But hitting the radar stations was an initial component of Adlertag and the following two weeks.

The continuing effort to bring the RAF to its knees included the systematic bombing of its airfields scattered across southern and central England, the destruction of the 300-foot towers and installations of the Chain Home radar network, and the elimination of the planes and pilots of Fighter Command once and for all.

During Adlertag three radar stations were hit by Luftwaffe bombers, knocking them off the air for only six hours as a lack of planned follow-up attacks allowed Chain Home to recover. Airfields in the south were attacked. On Adlertag the Germans lost 46 planes and

1940

RAF retaliates
In response to the Luftwaffe bombing of London, 40 RAF bombers attack Berlin, the Nazi capital, causing Hitler to change tactics during the Battle of Britain.
25 August

Debden Airfield hit
Hit by at least 100 German bombs, RAF Debden, located in Essex northeast of London, endures its third Luftwaffe air raid.
31 August

The Blitz begins
The Luftwaffe sends 400 bombers escorted by 600 fighters to attack the docks of London's East End. Raids occur around the clock, and later the Luftwaffe switches to nocturnal attacks.
7 September

Sea Lion denied
Aware that the Luftwaffe cannot achieve air superiority over Britain, the RAF, and the English Channel, Hitler postpones and eventually cancels Operation Sea Lion, the proposed invasion of the British Isles.
17 September

Last great gasp
Three coordinated Luftwaffe air raids hit London, Portsmouth, and other targets in the last large-scale attacks of the Battle of Britain, although the Blitz continues against British cities.
29 October

Final victory
Generally accepted as the end of the Battle of Britain, air operations are hampered by bad weather, and Luftwaffe attacks are no longer daily events.
31 October

the RAF just 13. However, days of intense aerial combat followed.

Air battles intensified

By 15-16th August, the air battles above England had reached fever pitch. The number of combined combatant sorties neared 2,700. Scores of RAF and Luftwaffe planes were seen tangled in the skies. On the 15th, later known as "The Greatest Day," RAF pilots destroyed 75 German planes and lost 30 of their own.

18th August, known to the British as "The Hardest Day" and to the Germans as "Black Thursday," left RAF commanders deeply concerned with the staying power of their planes and pilots while Hitler's confidence in his aerial might was shaken. The Luftwaffe lost 69 planes, the RAF 68. Raids on British airfields continued with telling effect. At RAF Kenley in Surrey, all 10 hangars were demolished. A dozen planes, including 10 precious Hurricanes, were destroyed, and bombs cratered runways.

In 10 days of aerial combat from 8-18th August, the RAF lost 175 planes, while Luftwaffe losses reached a staggering 332 aircraft. Although its losses were only about half those of the Luftwaffe, the RAF was strained to breaking point. Some replacement pilots were procured from Bomber Command, and the pace of new fighter production peaked.

On 20th August, at the height of the great air battle, Churchill rose once again in the House of Commons. He offered, "The gratitude of every home in our Island, in our Empire, and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen who, undaunted by odds, unwearied in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of the World War by their prowess and by their devotion. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

Reprieve and resurgence

The prime minister's stirring words touched the people of Britain, the fighting pilots of the RAF who came to be known as "The Few," and the free world. Still, the issue remained in doubt. By the end of the month, six out of seven main RAF bases in southeastern England had been severely damaged. Nevertheless, the RAF had given Hitler pause. On 3rd September, Operation Sea Lion, already postponed once, was delayed another three weeks. While Luftwaffe daylight raids against RAF installations and manufacturing facilities continued, Göring also directed nocturnal attacks against military targets across Britain.



Battle of Britain Day
15 September 1940
Heavy Luftwaffe raids target London, but RAF fighters shoot down 80 enemy aircraft, wresting the initiative from the Germans during the Battle of Britain

However, major cities were not targeted due to the certainty of RAF retaliation against German population centers. On the night of 24th August, a few Luftwaffe bombers drifted off course, dropping their bombs on London. The following night, RAF bombers hit Berlin.

Hitler flew into a rage and directed a new strategy, terror bombing to break the fighting spirit of the British people. On 7th September, German bombers appeared over London in strength. More than 2,000 civilians were killed or wounded. For 57 consecutive nights, the British capital was ravaged.

The Luftwaffe's refocus on British cities did not fully suspend daylight operations. However, Fighter Command was given the opportunity to rest and refit. Then, the turning point in the struggle for air superiority occurred. Two massive raids were launched against targets in Britain on 15th September. The RAF put 300 fighters into the air and shot down 80 enemy planes. The Luftwaffe could not sustain such losses; the number and size of further raids were curtailed. 15th September is still commemorated annually as "Battle of Britain Day."

The catastrophe prompted Hitler to cancel Operation Sea Lion indefinitely two days later. He then ordered the barges and other naval craft assembled for the cross-Channel invasion to disperse. By mid-October, it was clear that the Royal Air Force had won the Battle of Britain.

Casualties during four months of aerial combat included nearly 1,600 RAF airmen killed and over 400 wounded with 1,744 planes lost. The Luftwaffe suffered 2,600 dead, 735 wounded, and more than 900 taken prisoner. Nearly 2,000 German planes were destroyed.

Appalling postscript

Although the Nazi war machine had been slowed in the skies over England, the Luftwaffe continued its terror bombing campaign for months. London was not the only city to suffer the wrath of Hitler and the Luftwaffe. On 14th November 1940, Coventry was assailed by 400 bombers, killing 568 people and injuring another 1,200. Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and others were subjected to intense air raids. The Blitz, as it came to be known, lasted for months, until May 1941.

By then, Hitler had already concluded that Britain would never buckle under an aerial assault. British cities had burned and crumbled, but the RAF remained resolute. The Führer turned away from the West. Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, was only weeks away. The Battle of Britain was won, but others were just beginning.





ICONIC MOMENT

LONDON POST-BLITZ

The Battle of Britain was Nazi Germany's first major defeat, thanks in part to the RAF pilots who came from across the commonwealth to help.

1940

SECOND BATTLE OF EL ALAMEIN

EGYPT, 23 OCTOBER – 11 NOVEMBER 1942



For most of 1942, the North African campaign had not gone well for the Allies. Since the fall of France in 1940, Britain had borne the brunt of the fighting against both Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, but two years later, the struggle in the desert had witnessed dramatic changes in fortunes on both sides.

With the Axis dominating the northern half of the Mediterranean Sea, Britain's imperial possessions in the Middle East came under direct threat. Chief among their concerns was the security of the Suez Canal. If Axis forces took it, then Britain's communication and supply routes to its empire in India and the Far East would be cut off. Without the canal, it was widely believed that Britain could not carry on fighting the war.

Both sides knew this, and therefore the deserts of North Africa became an intense fighting ground that ebbed and flowed depending on the combatants' fighting ability, logistical constraints and the strategic priorities of political leaders. At first things went well for the British. They were initially faced with the Italians who attacked Egypt from their colony of Libya, but were easily swept back. Next, however, they faced the Afrika Korps of the Wehrmacht sent by Adolf Hitler in support of his Italian allies. The Korps was led by the formidable Field Marshal Erwin Rommel – a highly experienced general, tank commander, decorated World War I veteran and a key player during the Battle of France. His use of surprise tactics and continued momentum to push the Allies out of Libya, despite often being outnumbered, soon earned him the nickname the 'Desert Fox'.

By 1942, the British Eighth Army was withdrawing to the Egyptian frontier. The Allied fortress of Tobruk fell on 21 June with more than 30,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers taken prisoner. This was the largest number of Allied prisoners taken since the fall of Singapore earlier in the year. This meant the situation had become perilous for the British.

However, one of Rommel's weaknesses was that he often suffered from a shortage of supplies, particularly fuel for his panzers and other armoured vehicles. This was largely

"WITH THE AXIS DOMINATING THE NORTHERN HALF OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA, BRITAIN'S IMPERIAL POSSESSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST CAME UNDER DIRECT THREAT"

OPPOSING FORCES

ALLIES		AXIS
LEADER		LEADER
Bernard Montgomery		Erwin Rommel
SOLDIERS		SOLDIERS
195,000		116,000
TANKS		TANKS
1,000		540
ARTILLERY		ARTILLERY
900		500
ANTI-TANK GUNS		ANTI-TANK GUNS
1,400		490



Two Commonwealth soldiers capture a German on 25 October during a sandstorm. British imperial troops formed a significant part of the Eighth Army

because the Royal Navy and RAF in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic harassed the German supply routes. This handicap was temporarily eased by the fall of Tobruk, as Rommel captured lots of supplies from the British. This enabled him to advance much further into Egypt.

Building defences

There was now a real threat that Egypt could fall to the Axis forces and the entire North African campaign would be lost. By this time, the USA had entered the war but not yet arrived in sufficient numbers to tip the balance in the Allies' favour. It was up to the Eighth Army to reorganise and throw Rommel back.

The British commander, Lieutenant General Claude Auchinleck, constructed a new defence line from the minor railway station at El Alamein. The line stretched more than 30 miles from the coast to the Qattara Depression in the south. The Depression was important, as its terrain was full of features that were impossible for motorised vehicles to pass through, such as salt lakes and very fine powdered sand. Additionally, the El Alamein defences were effectively fenced off at the Depression by high cliffs, which made it impossible for Rommel to outflank the British. For the Eighth Army, the Alamein line became the last defence – if Axis forces broke through, Auchinleck intended to hold the Germans on the Suez Canal and even in Palestine if necessary.

What became known as the First Battle of El Alamein started on 1 July when Rommel attacked the British line. This offensive was repulsed thanks to the Desert Air Force and a timely sandstorm, so Rommel made further assaults against the line throughout the month, all unsuccessful.

At the same time, the British could not drive Rommel back. The result was a stalemate. This first battle prevented Rommel from advancing further into Egypt, but it was only a temporary measure. El Alamein was 240 kilometres from Cairo and, more alarmingly, only 106 kilometres from the vital port of Alexandria. The sense of emergency was becoming acute.

In particular, Winston Churchill was becoming highly impatient with his generals – the British Army had not won a major land battle since the war began and he was becoming increasingly frustrated with the situation in North Africa. He remarked after the fall of Tobruk: "Defeat is one thing, disgrace is another," and he was still not satisfied after the First Battle of El Alamein had checked the Axis advance. Even Rommel remarked to captured British soldiers at Tobruk: "Gentlemen, you have fought like lions and been led by donkeys."

Churchill needed to prove to his new American allies that the British were a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield. With that in mind, he removed Auchinleck, despite his early success at El Alamein, and installed Lieutenant General William Gott as commander of Eighth Army. However, before he could take up his post, Gott was shot down and killed in a plane crash. He was then replaced by Lieutenant General Bernard Montgomery.

Monty's moment comes

Montgomery was not Churchill's first choice to command the Eighth Army – he had a reputation for being difficult to work with. Churchill later remarked about his famous general: "In defeat unbeatable, in victory unbearable." However, Montgomery was extremely confident and immediately set about reorganising the army and improving morale. When he was appointed, he found his troops "brave but baffled" after two years of gruelling stalemate and defeat. He now made it clear there would be no retreat from the El Alamein line, declaring to his men: "I want to impress on everyone that the bad times are over."

His strategy was relatively simple: to repulse Rommel's next attack and then go on the offensive. Part of his new strategy was to make himself visible to his troops and encourage them. He concluded that: "It seemed to me that the men needed not only a master but a mascot. I deliberately set about fulfilling this requirement." To this end, Montgomery visited every unit possible, explained the situation to them and adopted the black beret of the Royal Tank Regiment – this had the dual effect of making him instantly recognisable and like one of the ordinary soldiers. Consequently, he became a popular commander, and his troops nicknamed him 'Monty'.

Now that he was in command, Montgomery felt it was imperative to have the maximum number of troops and equipment before taking on Rommel. This was at odds with Churchill, who wanted a quick attack before the end of September at the latest, but Montgomery remained insistent. Meanwhile, Rommel was having logistical problems. He was very short of fuel, largely thanks to the British attacking a German fleet of six tankers and ammunition ships. Four of the ships were sunk and two did not reach the Afrika Korps on time. This meant that Rommel was lacking the resources to reach the Suez Canal and would be forced to rely on capturing British fuel dumps. Montgomery took this opportunity to bait Rommel into attempting to take the Alam Halfa ridge beyond the El Alamein line in September. Rommel obliged, and was eventually forced to withdraw after encountering problems with minefields and attacks from the air, as well as tanks from the ridge itself.

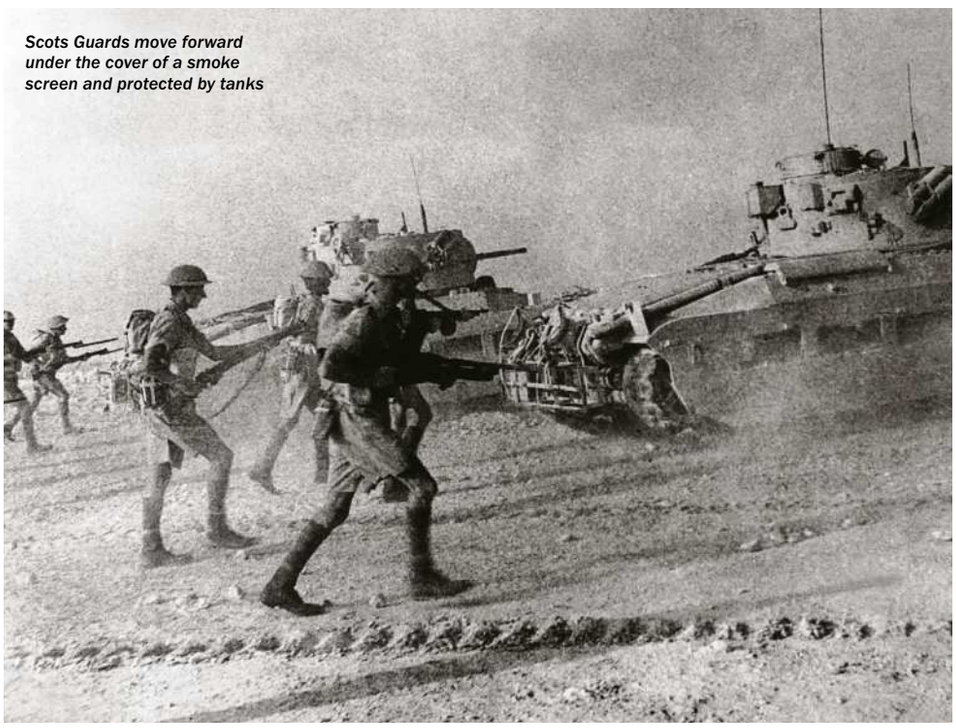
By now the Desert Fox was dangerously low on fuel. Axis ports on the Egyptian and Libyan coasts were under constant Allied air attacks and many German supplies had to come all the way from Tripoli more than 1,600 kilometres away. The stress of the campaign was making Rommel ill, and he left to recuperate in Germany on 23 September, leaving strict instructions to strengthen the minefields that covered his positions.

The mines that the Germans laid would become a considerable problem to the Allies – approximately 3 million mines were placed directly in front of the El Alamein line, as well as large entanglements of barbed wire. Montgomery could have no hope of outflanking what became known as the 'Devil's Garden' and made preparations for a full-frontal assault over the next month.

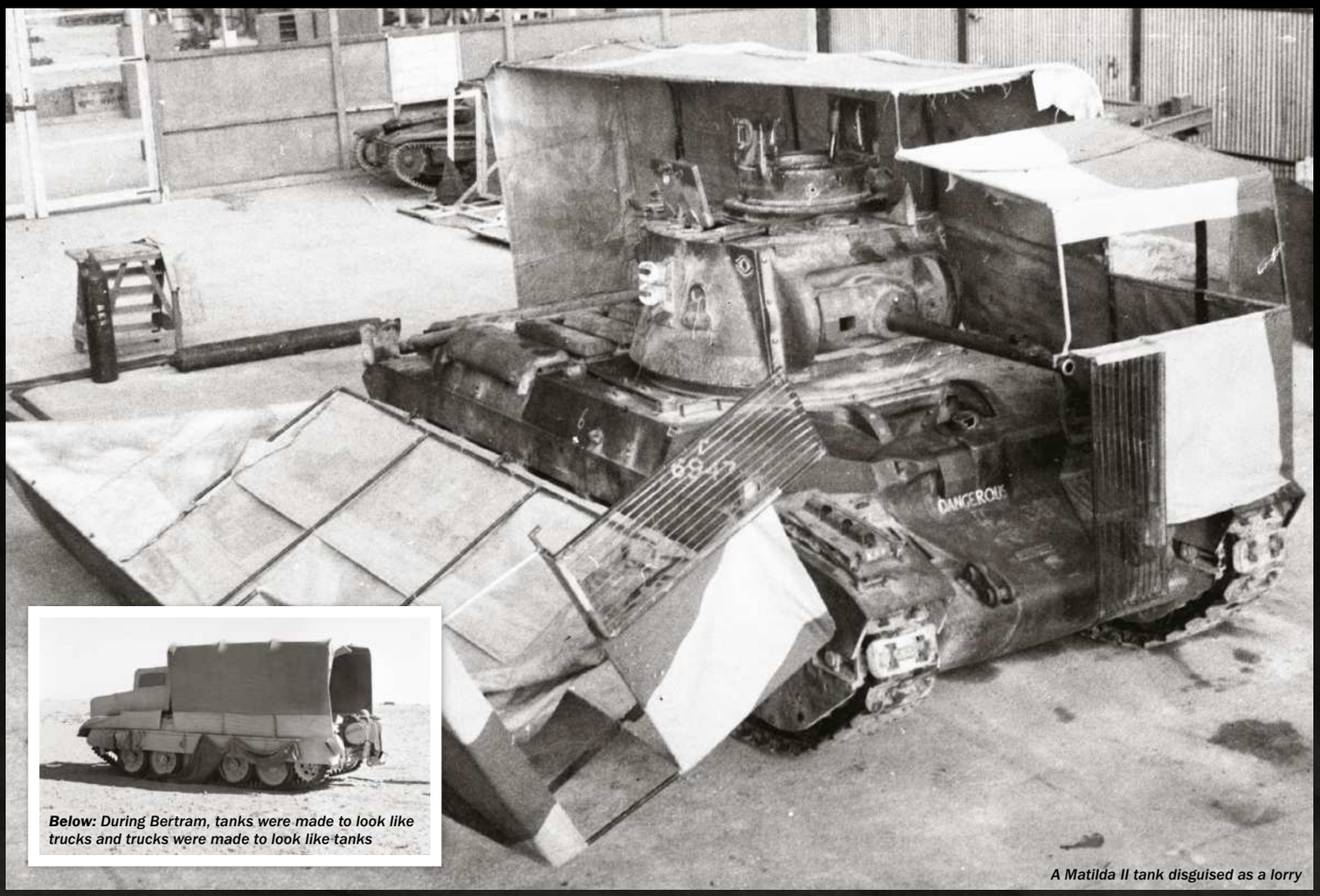
Opening shots

By late October, the Eighth Army numbered nearly 200,000 men, including great numbers of soldiers from India, New Zealand, South

"THERE WAS NOW A REAL THREAT THAT EGYPT COULD FALL TO THE AXIS FORCES AND THE ENTIRE NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN WOULD BE LOST"



Scots Guards move forward under the cover of a smoke screen and protected by tanks



A Matilda II tank disguised as a lorry

***Below:** During Bertram, tanks were made to look like trucks and trucks were made to look like tanks*

OPERATION BERTRAM

HOW MONTY'S ARMY OF ILLUSIONISTS FOOLED THE GERMANS AND SECURED VICTORY

When Winston Churchill announced the victory of El Alamein to the House of Commons, he stated: "By a marvellous system of camouflage, complete tactical surprise was achieved in the desert." What he was referring to was an ingenious part of Montgomery's battle plan: Operation Bertram.

Bertram was the largest visual deception campaign of the war. It was an elaborate manoeuvre of real and fake military equipment undertaken by the Camouflage Unit. Formed in 1940, the group consisted of civilian soldiers who were usually artists, sculptors, filmmakers, theatre designers and set painters. It even included the famous magician Jasper Maskelyne. The fake army was largely made out of string, canvas, straw and wood.

Disguised tanks were codenamed 'Sunshields' and disguised guns were known as 'Cannibals'. 722 Sunshields, 360 Cannibals and many more dummy tanks and transport vehicles were constructed in six weeks before the battle started. The tactics for Bertram involved hundreds of tanks and artillery pieces being moved overnight into combat positions hidden under canvas covers that disguised them as harmless lorries. Decoys were left behind where the real tanks and guns had been. The dummy army was placed largely in the south of the El Alamein line in the weeks before the battle started. There was even a fake water pipeline, with gradual construction that crept southwards. The idea was to fool the German reconnaissance into reporting a large build-up of forces in the south while in reality the attack would be further north.

On the eve of the battle, the unit performed the biggest conjuring trick in history by making 600 tanks 'disappear' and then reappear 80 kilometres to the north disguised as trucks. After the battle, the captured General von Thoma, Rommel's second-in-command, confirmed to Montgomery that the Axis leaders were fooled by Bertram, expecting the attack to come from the south. They had been completely taken aback by the northern offensive. The deception had worked its magic.

"BERTRAM WAS THE LARGEST VISUAL DECEPTION CAMPAIGN OF THE WAR. IT WAS AN ELABORATE MANOEUVRE OF REAL AND FAKE MILITARY EQUIPMENT UNDERTAKEN BY THE CAMOUFLAGE UNIT"



***Above:** Jasper Maskelyne was a famous magician serving in the Camouflage Unit*



✪ 01 OPERATION LIGHTFOOT

The battle begins on the night of 23-24 October with an Allied offensive consisting of a powerful artillery bombardment. Afterwards, British infantry units open paths in the minefield to allow the armoured divisions to pass through.

✪ 02 THE ALLIES GET STUCK

Around 4am on 24 October, dust clouds, hidden mines and fierce Italian resistance slow down the Allied tanks in the minefield. By dawn, many of the minefields have not been cleared, disrupting Montgomery's battle plans.



✪ 03 THE 'CRUMBLING'

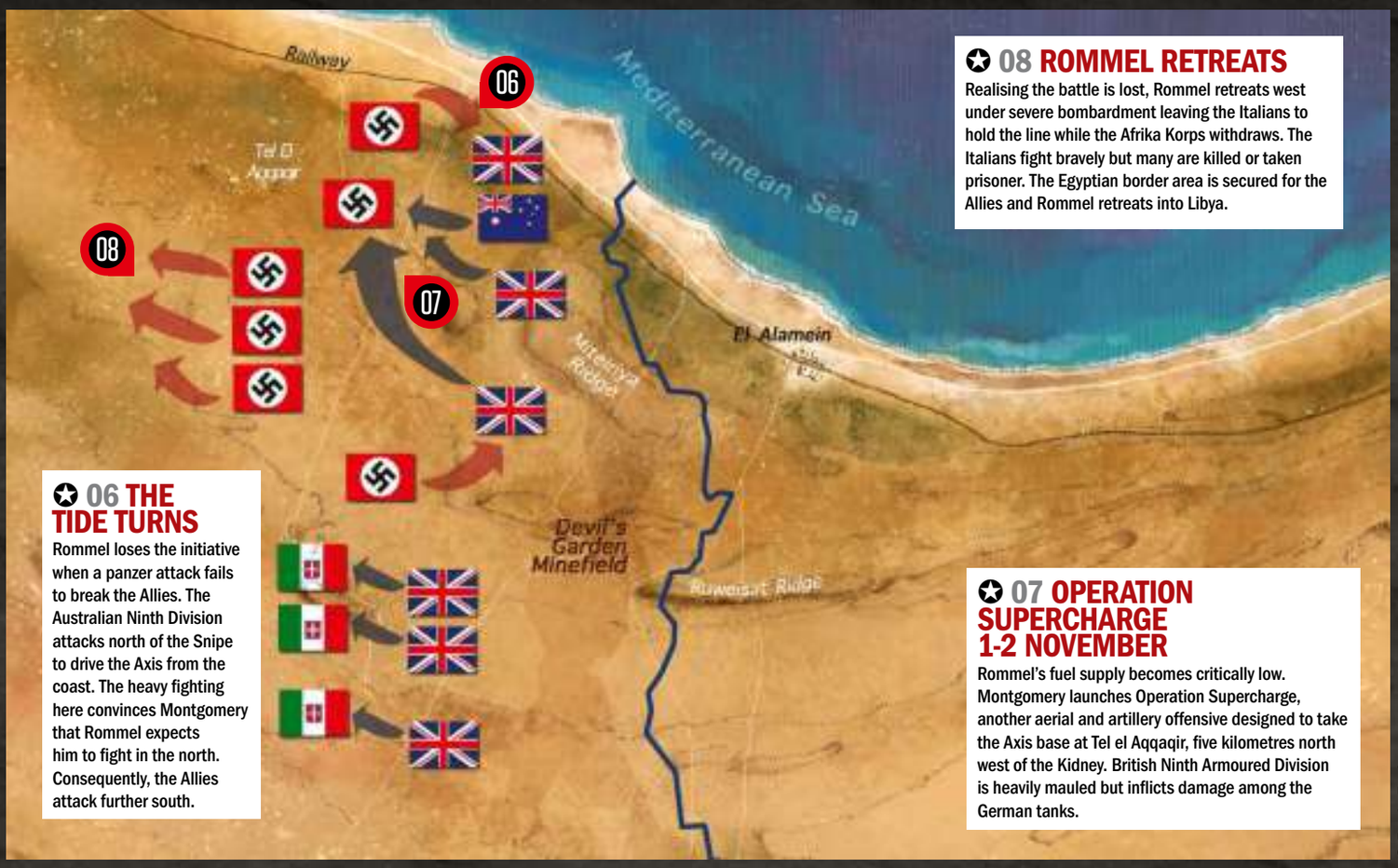
Between 24 and 25 October, Montgomery pushes forward to scatter Axis forces using heavy bombardment and breaking up their divisions. Panzers attack the 51st Highland Division but are halted. The Desert Air Force makes more than 1,000 sorties. However, brutal infantry and tank battles plus continuing problems with mines slow the Allies' progress.

✪ 05 FIGHTING AT KIDNEY AND SNIPE

On 26 October, there is fierce fighting at the Snipe, an area of Axis resistance south west of a feature called the Kidney. The Rifle Brigade bravely holds its ground against Rommel's tank regiments. Eventually both sides withdraw from the Snipe in error, believing the other to be near victory.

✪ 04 ROMMEL TAKES CHARGE

Rommel returns to North Africa after a medical absence. He immediately orders a counterattack on 26 October in the north battle sector. The Australians take the brunt of the assault. In the south, the British fail to take advantage of Rommel's diverted panzers and are stalled by anti-tank fire.



✪ 08 ROMMEL RETREATS

Realising the battle is lost, Rommel retreats west under severe bombardment leaving the Italians to hold the line while the Afrika Korps withdraws. The Italians fight bravely but many are killed or taken prisoner. The Egyptian border area is secured for the Allies and Rommel retreats into Libya.

✪ 06 THE TIDE TURNS

Rommel loses the initiative when a panzer attack fails to break the Allies. The Australian Ninth Division attacks north of the Snipe to drive the Axis from the coast. The heavy fighting here convinces Montgomery that Rommel expects him to fight in the north. Consequently, the Allies attack further south.

✪ 07 OPERATION SUPERCHARGE 1-2 NOVEMBER

Rommel's fuel supply becomes critically low. Montgomery launches Operation Supercharge, another aerial and artillery offensive designed to take the Axis base at Tel el Aqqaqir, five kilometres north west of the Kidney. British Ninth Armoured Division is heavily mauled but inflicts damage among the German tanks.

© Rocio Espin



The Axis forces engaged at El Alamein lost 30 per cent of its starting strength



Erwin Rommel with his officers. By October 1942, the 'Desert Fox' had pushed the Allies across North Africa and far into Egypt



"NOW THAT HE WAS IN COMMAND, MONTGOMERY FELT IT WAS IMPERATIVE TO HAVE THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT BEFORE TAKING ON ROMMEL"

Africa and, most significantly, Australia. The forthcoming battle was arguably to be the last great pitched fight of the British Empire. In addition to the imperial divisions, there were Free French, Polish and Greek brigades on the Allied side. Montgomery was also well equipped, with more than 1,000 tanks, 900 artillery pieces and 1,400 anti-tank guns.

The Axis forces looked small by comparison. They had approximately 116,000 German and Italian soldiers, 540 tanks, 500 artillery pieces and 490 anti-tank guns. Montgomery had good reason to feel confident, and made a rousing speech to his men: "Every soldier must know, before he goes into battle, how the little battle he is to fight fits into the larger picture, and how the success of his fighting will influence the battle as a whole." This personal touch raised the Eighth Army's morale to a level not seen for a long time. Nevertheless, the coming clash would be no walk in the park, and the Axis forces would show they were a dangerous foe.

On the night of 23-24 October, the Second Battle of El Alamein began with a huge Allied artillery barrage that lasted for more than five hours, first with a general heavy bombardment and then a more systematic shelling of targets. This first phase of the battle was codenamed 'Operation Lightfoot', and its intention was to distract Rommel's troops while Allied infantry and engineers of XXX Corps worked their way through the minefield. They were attempting to create two channels for the British armoured divisions to advance through. It was a painstaking, hazardous process that involved clearing eight kilometres of mines, but was necessary as it meant that many of the mines would not be tripped by the walking troops – hence the name Operation Lightfoot.

At about 4am on 24 October, the armoured X Corps began to enter the middle of the minefield. However, they became hampered by traffic jams, dust clouds created by their own vehicle tracks and many remaining mines. The forward infantry were also under a determined attack by the Ariete, Brescia and Folgore Italian brigades. Many of the British tanks suffered punishing losses from anti-tank guns and none of the Allies' original objectives were met.

Ignoring the setbacks, Montgomery held his nerve and commenced the next stage of his attack. After surveying the situation at dawn on 24 October, he ordered the minefield paths to be fully cleared before starting the 'Crumbling' of the Axis defences, which involved a continued heavy bombardment that was designed to break up the enemy divisions. At the same time, the Desert Air Force made more than 1,000 sorties against the Axis forces. A unit of Panzer tanks tried to attack the 51st Highland Division of infantry but were



Though they fought bravely, tens of thousands of Italian soldiers were taken prisoner during and after the battle

halted. The Afrika Korps also suffered the loss of Commander Georg Stumme when he died of a heart attack en route to assessing the battlefield situation and had to be replaced by General Wilhelm von Thoma.

The Allies were also suffering, as there had been little progress made throughout 24-25 October against intense tank battles and continuing problems with mines, which were still disabling armoured units. In the heat of this deadlock, Rommel returned to North Africa and assessed the situation. Thanks to Montgomery's 'Crumbling' the Axis had taken heavy losses, with some Italian units taking 50 per cent casualties. In general, his troops were under strain and short on equipment, and the entire army had only a few days of fuel left. He concluded that the only option was to immediately counterattack while he still could, so struck north with Panzer and Italian divisions and forced an Australian battalion back.

By now much of the general fighting was taking place around a hilly feature called the 'Kidney', positioned at the far edge of the Axis minefield. If it could be successfully overrun, then the Allies would be able to start a general advance. Rommel diverted many of his tanks north of the Kidney for the counterattack, but the British were unable to take advantage of this diversion and were stalled by anti-tank fire. Luckily for the Allies, that day the RAF sunk two German oil tankers at Tobruk, removing the last chance to refuel the Afrika Korps. This incident would hinder Rommel's chances of success.

"HE CONCLUDED THAT THE ONLY OPTION WAS TO IMMEDIATELY COUNTERATTACK WHILE HE STILL COULD"

'Operation Supercharge'

On 27 October, fierce fighting began south west of the Kidney in an area of resistance called the 'Snipe'. The British Rifle Brigade had captured the area and brought up 13 anti-tank guns to defend the position, so Rommel threw the 21st Panzer Division at it.

Despite being nearly overrun, the riflemen held their ground, destroying many German and Italian tanks in the process. Eventually the panzers withdrew, but the British were also withdrawn without being replaced, leaving the Snipe unoccupied.

Despite this, and the continuing ferocity of the fighting, the tide was now beginning to slowly turn in the Allies' favour. Between 28 October and 1 November, Montgomery's superiority in men and equipment began to pay dividends. For instance, two panzer divisions combined to make a determined attack on 28 October but were eventually driven back by sustained fire.

Rommel had by now lost the initiative, and from this point would continually be on the back foot in Africa. Montgomery ordered his units in the Snipe area to go on the defensive while he launched an attack further north. The Australian Ninth Division was ordered to attack German positions near the coastal area in order to force them south west. They reached



British armoured units drive through the Devil's Garden. The Axis minefield was a huge hindrance to the Allied advance

some of their objectives, but encountered great resistance as Rommel threw in a large part of his army to block them.

In the end, the Australian operation was called off, but its actions were of great tactical use to Montgomery. He had observed that Rommel was committing reserves against the Australians, thereby indicating that he anticipated an Eighth Army offensive in the north. It was decided to launch the new offensive further south. Monty ordered the Australians to re-launch their attack, to distract Rommel while the rest of the Eighth Army regrouped. When the Australians restarted their assault, the Axis counterattack resulted in bloody, hand-to-hand fighting, draining Rommel's resources further. On 2 November, Montgomery launched 'Operation Supercharge'.

Supercharge's aim was to force the enemy out of the minefield and into open ground, destroy its armour, whittle down its fuel supplies further and take Rommel's defence base at Tel el Aqqaqir, which was three miles north west of the Kidney.

If anything, the Allied aerial, armoured and artillery firepower were more intense than during Operation Lightfoot. Tel el Aqqaqir was bombed from the air for seven hours before four hours of artillery fire. Afterwards, led by New Zealand infantry, Allied tanks advanced towards the German positions and received a hammering from Axis anti-tank guns and panzers. The Ninth Armoured Division suffered particularly, losing 75 per cent of their tanks. At the same time, Axis counterattacks failed when the First Armoured Division joined the remains of the Ninth Armoured Division and the Afrika Korps were reduced to 35 tanks by the end of 2 November. This fighting became known as the 'Hammering of the Panzers'. On the same day, the Allies finally took the Snipe, and Montgomery made preparations for the final push.



A German artillery piece captured by Allied troops

The Desert Fox withdraws

Rommel concluded that the battle was lost and decided to save what he could of his army, despite receiving an order to fight to the end from Hitler. He began a gradual withdrawal, with the Italians doing most of the fighting. On 4 November, the Allies broke out into open desert and punched a hole in Rommel's lines that was 19 kilometres long. The Desert Fox was left with no choice but to order a retreat west. The Italians fought bravely under the circumstances, with the 40th Bologna Regiment not surrendering until they were virtually out of ammunition. Along the hole in the Axis lines, the Allies were attacked by Italian troops. At the same time the vast majority were taken prisoner with some Italian divisions being wiped out entirely.

The Allies pursued Rommel's retreating force for days, attempting to encircle and trap it particularly at Mersa Matruh and Sidi Barrani. These attempts failed, but by 11 November, all Axis troops had been chased out of Egypt. At this point Montgomery halted his infantry, only allowing some armoured and artillery units to carry on the pursuit in Libya. He wanted to regroup and reinforce his supplies before pushing further forward. Rommel lived to fight another day, but the Afrika Korps was now a hunted army.

The Second Battle of El Alamein was over. At a cost of 13,500 Allied casualties, Montgomery had won a decisive victory that changed the course of the Western War. Rommel's force had suffered badly, losing approximately 37,000 troops, totalling 30 per cent of all Axis forces engaged – they were losses he could ill afford. His army on the Libyan-Egyptian border now only consisted of 5,000 men, 20 tanks and 50 guns. A combined Anglo-American force had also landed at Morocco on 8 November and had Montgomery followed up his pursuit, the Afrika Korps might have been neutralised by the end of 1942.

However, this is not to denigrate the achievement of El Alamein. For the first time since the war began, the British Army had won a decisive battle against the Axis forces, restoring its martial reputation in the process. Montgomery turned into an overnight hero and would spend the rest of the war at the highest echelons of Allied command, much to the discomfort of some American commanders.

In many ways the true significance of El Alamein was psychological. It is true that the reality was a hard-fought success. The main factors that ensured victory were Montgomery's superior manpower, intelligence and equipment supplies combined with Rommel's numerical inferiority and woeful fuel situation. Had Rommel been better supplied, the final outcome might have been quite different. Some of the most significant actions took place away from the battlefield, such as Rommel's initial absence and the sinking of crucial German oil tankers by the RAF.

Nonetheless, British morale was boosted to a level yet unseen and Churchill ordered church bells to be rung across the country in celebration – many for the first time since 1939. El Alamein also proved to the occasionally sceptical Americans that British and imperial troops were more than capable of defeating Axis armies. By coincidence, the battle was the last time the British fought a large engagement without US co-operation.

For the remainder of 1942, the Afrika Korps was relentlessly chased across Libya, Algeria and Tunisia until they were eventually driven out of North Africa in 1943. This allowed the Allies to invade Sicily, and Italy and provided essential strategic security for preparations to invade France in 1944.

Once the war was over, El Alamein came to be seen as one of the most decisive turning points in the conflict. As Churchill once famously said: "Before Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein we never had a defeat."

THE DESERT SHERMAN

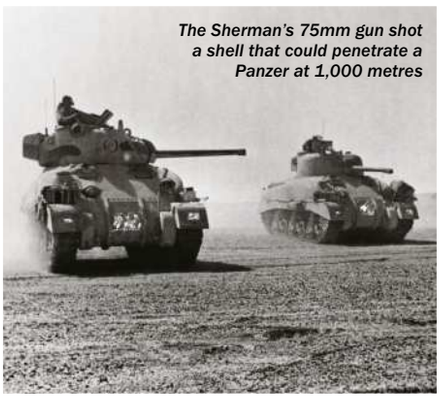
THIS AMERICAN TANK WON ITS COMBAT SPURS FIGHTING FOR THE BRITISH AT EL ALAMEIN

Winston Churchill first heard about the fall of Tobruk in the presence of President Roosevelt at the White House. He later remarked: "I did not attempt to hide from the president the shock I received." Roosevelt immediately offered to supply the latest American tanks for the Eighth Army, which included the M4 Sherman tank. Named after an American Civil War general, the Sherman was designed and built in the USA, going into production in autumn 1941. However, it would be the British who would first use it in active combat.

"DURING THE WAR, 8,500 PANZERS WERE BUILT COMPARED TO 49,200 SHERMANS. THE NUMERICAL PRODUCTION SUPERIORITY OF THE SHERMAN WAS REFLECTED ON THE BATTLEFIELD"



Sherman tanks of the Eighth Army move across the desert at speed



The Sherman's 75mm gun shot a shell that could penetrate a Panzer at 1,000 metres



Crews climb aboard their Sherman tanks

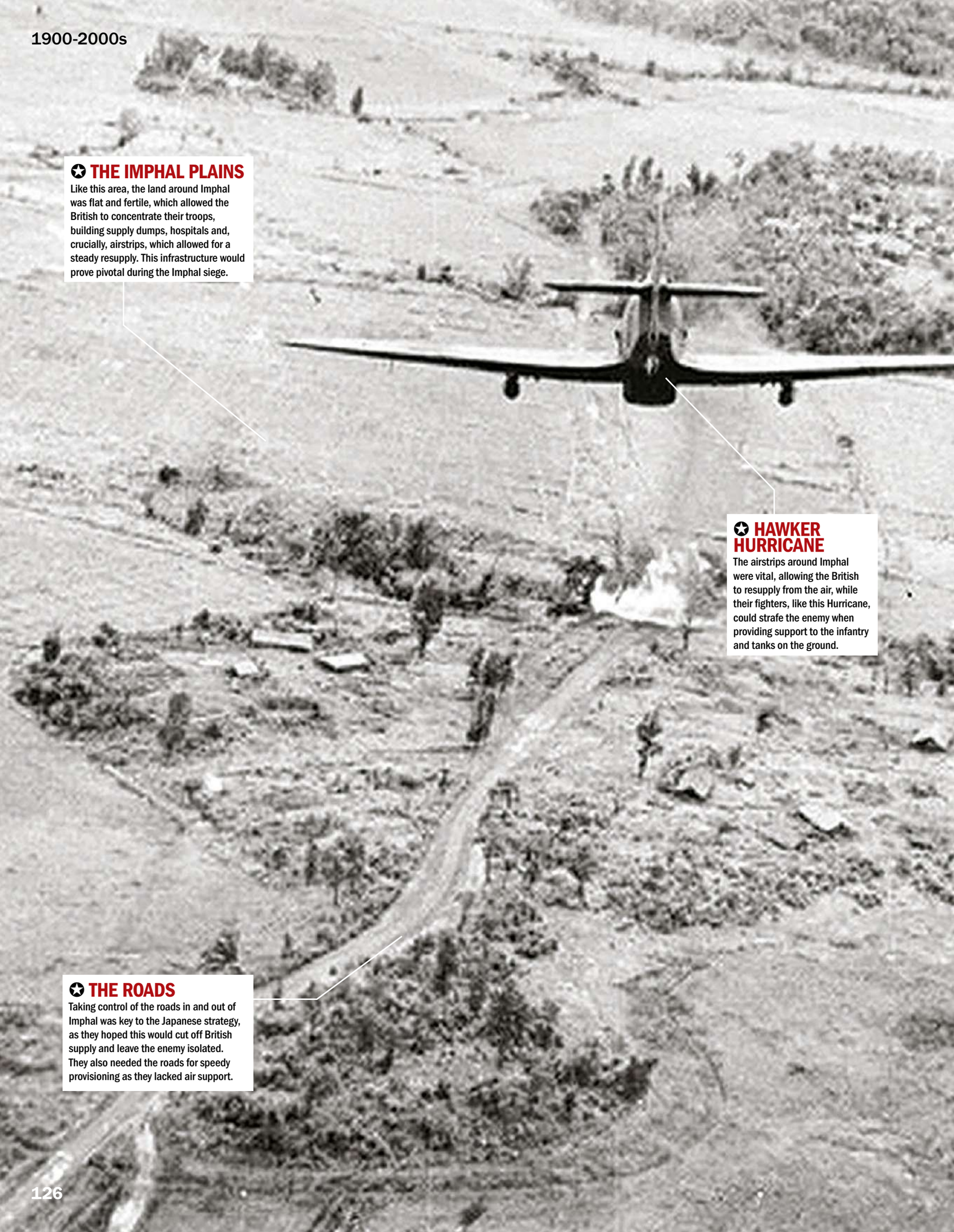
The Sherman was designed for speed and mobility, limiting the thickness of its armour and the size of its main gun, which was a short-barrelled, low-velocity 75mm cannon. This compromised the tank's firepower and survivability. Germans nicknamed them 'Tommy Cookers' as they gained a reputation for easily catching fire.

To compensate, the Sherman could fire faster than German Panzer IV tanks and required less fuel. However the Panzers enjoyed considerable superiority to the Sherman in that they had thicker armour and a greater firing range and accuracy.

The tank's most valuable asset was that it was cheaper and easier to build than a panzer. During the war, 8,500 panzers were built compared with 49,200 Shermans. The numerical production superiority of the Sherman was reflected on the battlefield. At El Alamein, Rommel had 540 tanks compared with Montgomery's more than 1,000 tanks, 300 of which were Shermans.

These 300 tanks formed the core of the Eighth Army's armoured units, especially the First Armoured Division. Montgomery had delayed starting the battle partially so the Shermans could be safely delivered. Although it had design flaws, a Sherman could shell a Panzer at 2,000 metres, which was an improvement on British tanks. The British victory ensured that the Sherman remained a ubiquitous presence in Allied armies.

North Africa marked the combat debut of the Sherman



✪ THE IMPHAL PLAINS

Like this area, the land around Imphal was flat and fertile, which allowed the British to concentrate their troops, building supply dumps, hospitals and, crucially, airstrips, which allowed for a steady resupply. This infrastructure would prove pivotal during the Imphal siege.

✪ HAWKER HURRICANE

The airstrips around Imphal were vital, allowing the British to resupply from the air, while their fighters, like this Hurricane, could strafe the enemy when providing support to the infantry and tanks on the ground.

✪ THE ROADS

Taking control of the roads in and out of Imphal was key to the Japanese strategy, as they hoped this would cut off British supply and leave the enemy isolated. They also needed the roads for speedy provisioning as they lacked air support.



✪ THE JUNGLE
Much of the Battle of Imphal unfolded in the jungles, which was grim terrain for soldiers with the heat, insects and the threat of the enemy lurking behind every frond.

BATTLE OF IMPHAL

NORTHEAST INDIA, MARCH-JULY 1944

The Japanese drove the British out of Burma in a swift and decisive campaign during 1942. By the May of that year the British had withdrawn into their Indian territories to the west, retrenching in Manipur and building an HQ at the state capital, Imphal, which stood on an open, fertile plane fringed by densely jungled hills and mountains. Here, the British commander, Lieutenant-General Slim of the 14th Army, oversaw the build up of a well-trained force, and by early 1944, IV Corps under Lieutenant-General Scoones was building up for a counterattack back into Burma.

The Japanese were aware of the build up of British forces – there were constant clashes and minor engagements – and were not prepared to await a counter-offensive. Indeed, with morale sinking back in Japan following defeats in the Pacific, the Tokyo high command elected to go on the attack. They would launch an assault against Imphal, Operation U-Go, as part of a wider offensive in the area. Their target was India itself.

What unfolded between March and July 1944 was a protracted, sprawling battle, comprising numerous small and mid-scale firefights around Imphal, as well as Kohima to the north. Many historians agree that the resulting defeat at Imphal was the greatest on land that Japan had suffered in its history to that point.

Lt-General Mutaguchi was given the responsibility of overseeing the Japanese invasion, and he hoped to lure British reserves away from Imphal by launching a number of different incursions, which would allow him to push on to Imphal with his main force. Imphal must be captured quickly otherwise the Japanese would starve; resupply in the field was practically impossible in such an inhospitable landscape without lengthy preparations.

Mutaguchi launched his assault in early March, and by the month's end, things looked to be going well. He had cut the Imphal-Kohima road, had elements of the 31st Division advancing on Kohima, and the 15th Division moving towards Imphal itself. The British IV Corps was now cut off from resupply by land.

However, unlike the Japanese troops, the British could be resupplied by air, and Operation Stamina – a vast air operation – was put into effect. IV Corps had built a strong defensive perimeter around Imphal, and by the time the main Japanese assault floundered at Kohima in early April, the tide had turned. Lt-General Slim ordered a counterattack. With the June monsoons approaching, the Japanese also pushed hard to break through, but with Allied air strikes helping the troops on the ground, Mutaguchi's troops were repulsed.

Aware that time was ebbing away, Mutaguchi sought a concerted attack on Imphal from the north, though his plans fell into Slim's hands and the Japanese stumbled once again. As the monsoons washed through June, resupply became increasingly difficult. The Japanese army was starving and on the verge of a rout. On 22 June, when the British reopened the Imphal-Kohima road, the siege was over.

The battle, however, was not. Slim sought to destroy the 15th Division entirely, and while his forces were exhausted, he knew the Japanese were in an even worse condition. The mopping-up exercise revealed a shattered army; 53,000 Japanese were lost with 30,000 dead or MIA, and most of their equipment was abandoned. The British suffered 16,000 casualties at Kohima and Imphal, though many fought again. The myth of Japanese invincibility had been blown away, and with the destruction of the 15th, the road into Burma lay open.

British 14th Army, IV Corps

TROOPS 150,000

DIVISIONS 4

TANKS 1 TANK BRIGADE



Lieutenant-General William Slim

LEADER

He led the 14th Army in the campaign to retake Burma.
STRENGTHS Worshipped by his men and a master of logistical supply during campaign.
WEAKNESS Refused command of the 12th Army after his masterful campaign with the 14th.



M3 Lee tank

KEY WEAPON

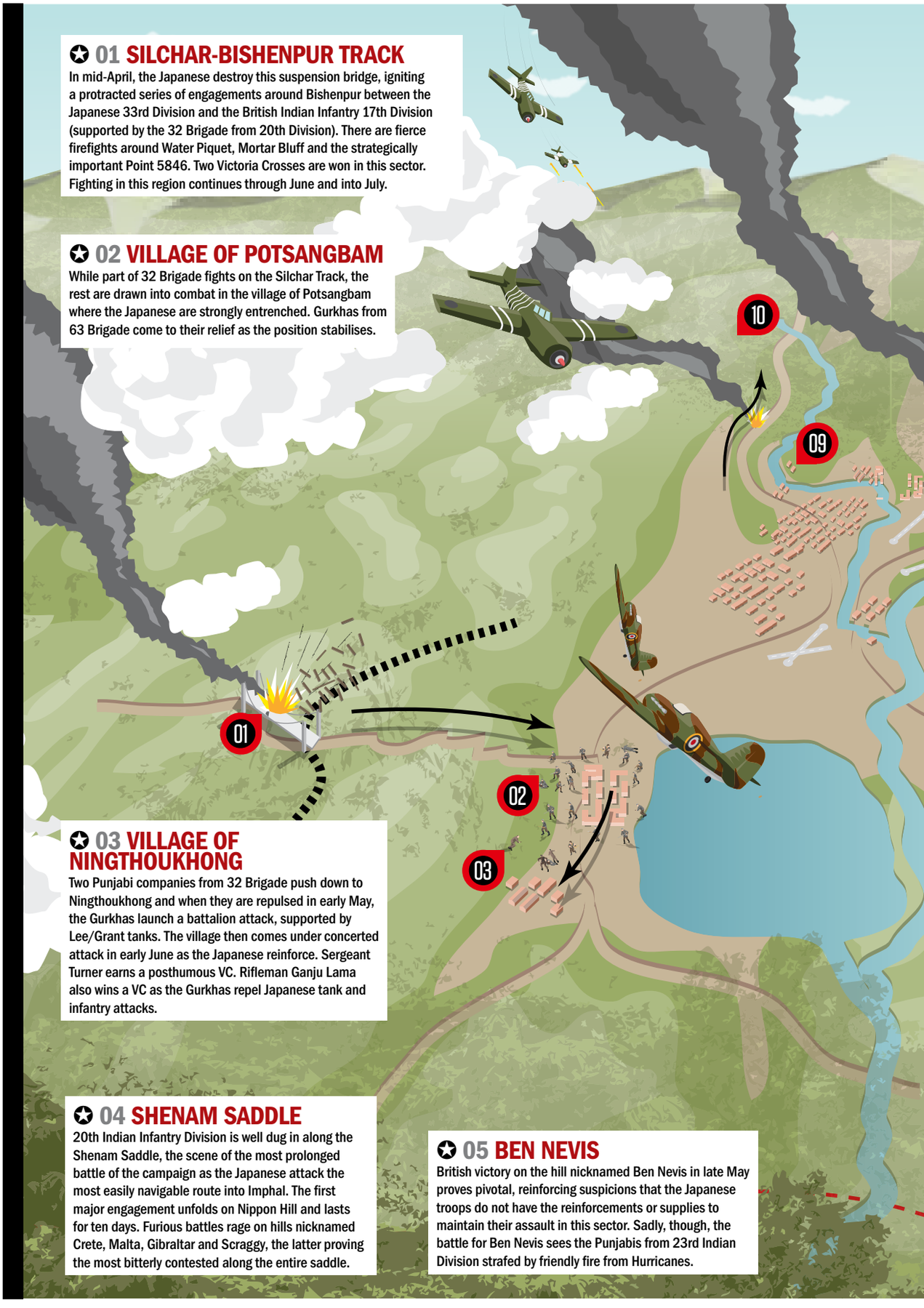
With a ready supply of fuel and ammo from the base at Imphal, this British armoured division helped swing the battle.
STRENGTH Highly mobile armour with Stuart, M3 Lee and M4 Sherman tanks.
WEAKNESS Like all armoured divisions, found some jungle terrain difficult.

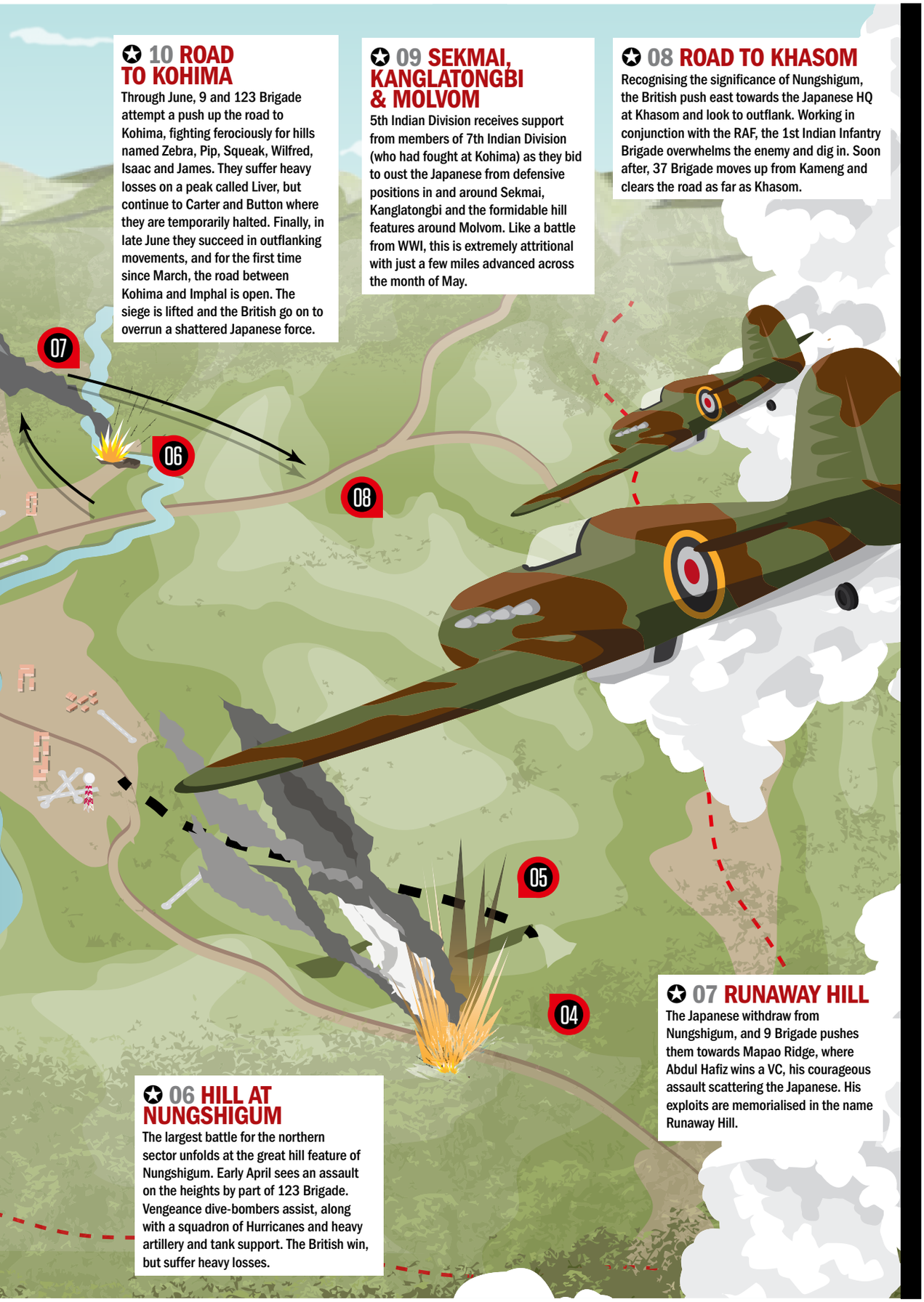


M4 Sherman tank

KEY WEAPON

Widely supplied to America's allies via the Lend-Lease programme, it found service with British divisions across the globe.
STRENGTHS Decent anti-tank armour and firepower with a ready supply of spare parts.
WEAKNESS Prone to occasional ammunition fires.





✪ 10 ROAD TO KOHIMA

Through June, 9 and 123 Brigade attempt a push up the road to Kohima, fighting ferociously for hills named Zebra, Pip, Squeak, Wilfred, Isaac and James. They suffer heavy losses on a peak called Liver, but continue to Carter and Button where they are temporarily halted. Finally, in late June they succeed in outflanking movements, and for the first time since March, the road between Kohima and Imphal is open. The siege is lifted and the British go on to overrun a shattered Japanese force.

✪ 09 SEKMAI, KANGLATONGBI & MOLVOM

5th Indian Division receives support from members of 7th Indian Division (who had fought at Kohima) as they bid to oust the Japanese from defensive positions in and around Sekmai, Kanglatongbi and the formidable hill features around Molvom. Like a battle from WWI, this is extremely attritional with just a few miles advanced across the month of May.

✪ 08 ROAD TO KHASOM

Recognising the significance of Nungshigum, the British push east towards the Japanese HQ at Khasom and look to outflank. Working in conjunction with the RAF, the 1st Indian Infantry Brigade overwhelms the enemy and dig in. Soon after, 37 Brigade moves up from Kameng and clears the road as far as Khasom.

✪ 07 RUNAWAY HILL

The Japanese withdraw from Nungshigum, and 9 Brigade pushes them towards Mapao Ridge, where Abdul Hafiz wins a VC, his courageous assault scattering the Japanese. His exploits are memorialised in the name Runaway Hill.

✪ 06 HILL AT NUNGSHIGUM

The largest battle for the northern sector unfolds at the great hill feature of Nungshigum. Early April sees an assault on the heights by part of 123 Brigade. Vengeance dive-bombers assist, along with a squadron of Hurricanes and heavy artillery and tank support. The British win, but suffer heavy losses.

Japanese 15th Division

TROOPS C.100,000

DIVISIONS 3

TANKS 1 TANK REGIMENT



Lieutenant-General Renya Mutaguchi

LEADER

Promoted to Lt-General in 1940, he played a prominent role in the invasion of Malaya and was injured in the battle for Singapore.
STRENGTHS Sound strategist, courageous and single-minded.
WEAKNESSES Underestimated enemy and refused to let his commanders retreat.



14th Tank Regiment

KEY WEAPON

Tank support was vital in the battle, and the 14th brought 66 assorted machines to the field.
STRENGTHS A mix of Type 95 light tanks, Type 97-Improved medium tanks & M3 light tanks.
WEAKNESS Largely inferior to the British tanks.



Type 97 medium tank

KEY WEAPON

The Type 97 is widely regarded as the best mass-produced Japanese tank of World War II.
STRENGTHS Light weight allowed for relatively fast deployment and good manoeuvrability.
WEAKNESS 47mm gun struggled to penetrate the frontal armour on M4 Shermans and M3 Lees.





NORMANDY LANDINGS

— NORMANDY, FRANCE 6 JUNE 1944 —

At approximately 6.30am he fell heavily, his pack lurching forward and with it his shoulders as the murky grey water hit him like a wall. He stumbled, the press of bodies behind him caring little for his lack of balance – only for their orders and whistling of bullets overhead, the steady crunch of artillery and the rattle of machine guns from the horizon where the sand became hillside. A hand took his shoulder roughly, scooping him up and pushing him forward in one smooth motion. He didn't hear what was being shouted, but he understood the message. If he didn't keep going, he would die here.

Five hours and 12 minutes before the 8th Infantry Regiment crashed from their landing craft and onto Utah Beach and a soldier lurched into murky grey waters, another military man exhaled steadily to bury his nerves. Wind rushed through the open hatch of the transport plane as it lurched drunkenly like a child's kite in a gale, tracer fire lighting up the sky around them as the German guns came alive. In the gloom, men smoked in silence – some prayed. The order was given and the red light flicked on, as one they came to their feet – cigarettes extinguished and prayers incomplete. He jumped and France rushed up to meet him.

That same night, perhaps 30 or 40 minutes before the the Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne leaped from their planes into the darkness of Normandy, British prime minister Winston Churchill turned from the window. He was late to bed by habit, but to his wife, Clementine, he looked restless. His features softened momentarily from the patrician scowl of a thousand newsreels, but you'd have to know him as she did to notice. "Do you realise", he said suddenly, taking the cigar from his lips, "that by the time you wake up in the morning, 20,000 men may have been killed?"

Churchill's fears of a catastrophic death toll awaiting the Allies and the fact that US troops were first onto the beaches and first from the planes was linked. From when the US had joined the war in December 1941, Churchill had been deferring Roosevelt's steadily more forceful pleas to take the war to France – instead they concentrated on North Africa and Italy. To Churchill's mind, Italy was the 'soft underbelly' of the Axis, but to the US, they were simply protecting Britain's vulnerable colonies.

If Churcill was haunted by the losses the British suffered in WWI, then his fears manoeuvred him toward a similar strategic conceit. Like his bloody Turkish beachhead at Gallipoli, Italy was a tougher nut to crack and the 'soft underbelly' had turned into a gruelling crawl up the mountainous peninsula. Stalin too was adding pressure to open a second front and to divide German forces from the epic slaughter going on in the frozen east.

THE LANDINGS

THE DEPLOYMENT OF ALLIED TROOPS ON 6 JUNE, D-DAY

Commander in Chief Air Force:
Air Chief Marshall Trafford Leigh-Mallory

1ST US ARMY

Commander: General Omar Bradley

VII CORPS
Commander: Major General JL Collins

- **4th Infantry Division 'Ivy'**
  Commander: Major General Raymond Barton **Objective:** First troops onto Utah Beach.
- **9th Infantry Division 'Old Reliables'**
  Commander: Major General Manton S Eddy **Objective:** Take and hold Utah Beach.
- **79th Infantry Division 'Cross of Lorraine'**
  Commander: Major General Ira T Wyche **Objective:** Take and hold Utah Beach.
- **90th Infantry Division 'Tough 'Ombres'**
  Commander: Brig-General Jay W MacKelvie **Objective:** Take and hold Utah Beach.
- **30 Commando Assault Unit 'Red Indians' (British)**
  Commander: Captain G Pike **Objective:** Take radar station at Douvres-la-Delivrande.
- **70th Tank Batalion 'Thunderbolts'**
  Commander: Lt-Colonel John C Welborn **Objective:** Support landing at Utah Beach.
- **237th Combat Engineer Battalion**
  Commander: Major Herschel E Linn **Objective:** Clear mines and obstacles at Utah Beach.
- **299th Combat Engineer Battalion**
  Commander: Colonel Milton Jewett **Objective:** Clear mines and obstacles at Utah Beach.

Utah

V CORPS
Commander: Major General Leonard T Gerow

- **1st Infantry Division 'The Big Red One'**
  Commander: Major General Clarence Huebner **Objective:** Take and hold Omaha Beach.
- **29th Infantry Division 'Blue And Gray'**
  Commander: Major General Charles Gebhardt **Objective:** Take and hold Omaha Beach.
- **743rd Tank Battalion**
  Commander: Lieutenant Colonel John S Upham **Objective:** Support landing at Omaha Beach.

Omaha

- **Ranger assault group**
  Commander: Lieutenant Colonel James Earl Rudder
- **2nd Ranger Battalion**
  Commander: Lieutenant Colonel James Earl Rudder **Objective:** Capture battery at Pointe du Hoc.
- **5th Ranger Battalion**
  Commander: Lieutenant Colonel Max Schneider **Objective:** Capture battery at Pointe du Hoc.

Pointe du Hoc

Speciality Key

- COMBAT ENGINEERS
- COVERT INTELLIGENCE GATHERING
- AMPHIBIOUS MEDIUM TANK
- LIGHT INFANTRY, VERSATILE AND RELIABLE
- AIR ASSAULT, LIGHT INFANTRY
- SPECIAL FORCES TRAINED FOR COASTAL ASSAULT
- INFANTRY, SPECIAL FORCES
- INFANTRY, FAST TANK
- MINE CLEARANCE, BRIDGING AND TRANSPORT



US troops look to the shore as their landing craft approaches Omaha Beach

INLAND

- **82nd Airborne Division 'All American Division'**
  Commander: Major General Matthew Ridgway **Objective:** Secure left flank and rear of VI Corps.
- **101st Airborne Division 'Screaming Eagles'**
  Commander: Major General Maxwell D Taylor **Objective:** Secure left flank and rear of VI Corps.



US Army Rangers at cliffs of Pointe du Hoc

Supreme Commander: General Dwight D Eisenhower

Commander in Chief Land Forces: General Field Marshall Montgommery

Commander in Chief Naval Force: Admiral Bertram Ramsay

2ND ARMY (BRITISH/CANADIAN)

Commander: Lieutenant General Sir Miles Dempsey

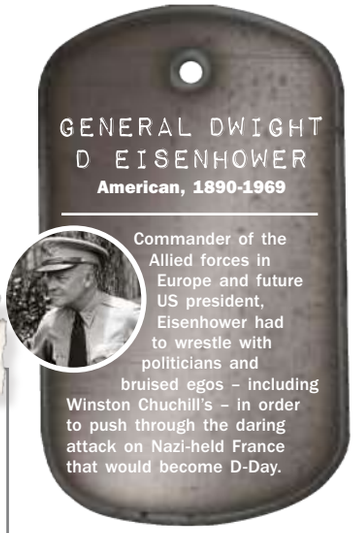
XXX Corps
Commander: Lieutenant General Gerard Bucknall

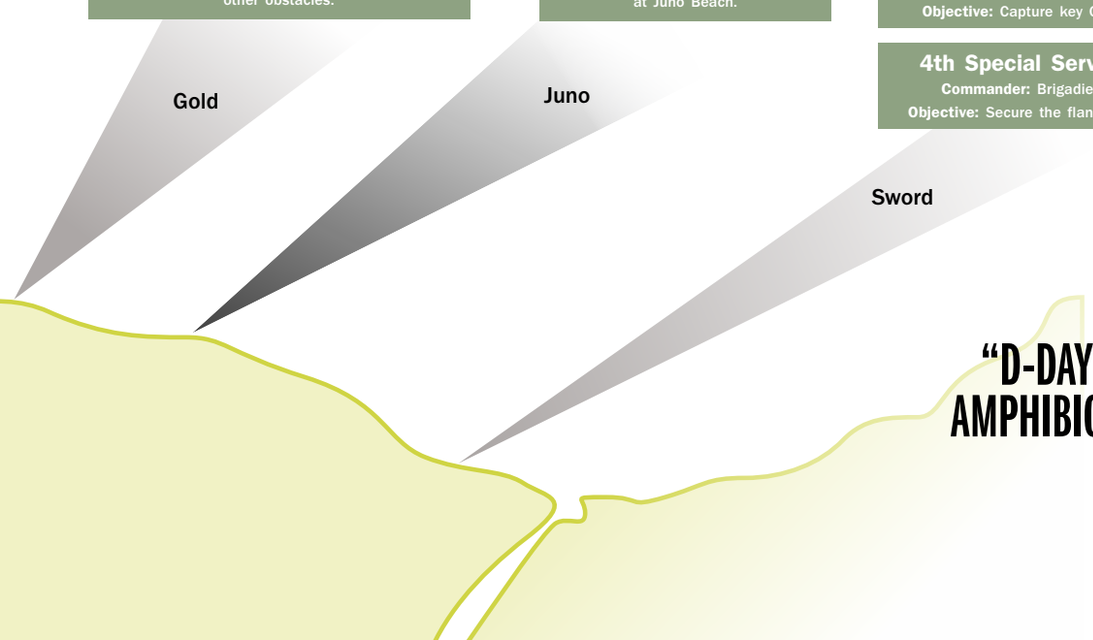
- **50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division** — **Commander:** Major General DAH Graham
  - **69th Infantry Brigade** — **Objective:** Take and hold Gold Beach.
  - **151st Infantry Brigade** — **Objective:** Take and hold Gold Beach.
  - **231st Infantry Brigade** — **Commander:** Brigadier Sir Alexander Stanier; **Objective:** Take and hold Gold Beach.
  - **56th Infantry Brigade** — **Objective:** Take and hold Gold Beach.
  - **8 Armoured Brigade** — **Commander:** Lieutenant Colonel John S Upham; **Objective:** Support the landing at Gold Beach.
  - **No 47 (Royal Marine) Command** — **Commander:** Lieutenant Colonel CF Phillips; **Objective:** Capture the port of Port-en-Bessin.
  - **1st Royal Marine Armoured Support Regiment** — **Commander:** Support Royal Marine assault.
  - **89th Field Company, Royal Engineers** — **Objective:** Clear Gold Beach exit of mines and other obstacles.
  - **90th Field Company, Royal Engineers** — **Objective:** Clear Gold Beach exit of mines and other obstacles.

- **3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade** — **Commander:** Major General Rodney FL Keller
  - **7th Canadian Infantry Brigade** — **Objective:** Take and hold Juno Beach.
  - **8th Canadian Infantry Brigade** — **Commander:** Brigadier Harry Wickwire Foster; **Objective:** Take and hold Juno Beach.
  - **2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade** — **Objective:** Support landing at Juno Beach.
  - **79th Armoured Division [British]** — **Commander:** Major General Sir Percy Hobart; **Objective:** Clear mines and assist landing at Juno Beach.
  - **9th Canadian Infantry Brigade** — **Objective:** Reserves, support landing at Juno Beach.

Commander: Major-General TG Rennie

- **8th Brigade (Assault Brigade)** — **Objective:** Take and hold Sword Beach.
  - **9th Brigade** — **Objective:** Take and hold Sword Beach.
  - **185th Brigade** — **Commander:** Brigadier KP Smith; **Objective:** Take and hold Sword Beach.
  - **5th Royal Marine Armoured Support Regiment** — **Objective:** Support landing at Sword Beach.
  - **27th Armoured Brigade** — **Commander:** Brigadier George Erroll Prior-Palmer; **Objective:** Support landing at Sword Beach.
  - **1st Special Service Brigade** — **Commander:** Brigadier Lord Lovat; **Objective:** Capture key German defences.
  - **4th Special Service Brigade** — **Commander:** Brigadier BW Leicester; **Objective:** Secure the flanks of Sword Beach.





Britain, its Commonwealth and its empire might have 'stood alone' in defence of Western democracy for the first two years of the war, but now they looked to be sidelined. Domestic US politics had come to define not just the war's long-term objectives – many of which, like the decolonisation of the British Empire and full repayment for the huge war loans the UK had incurred, Churchill begrudgingly acknowledged – but battlefield tactics.

While Roosevelt and Churchill made speeches and delighted the crowds at the Quebec Conference in August 1943, General George C Marshall, the US Army chief of staff and leading evangelist for a cross-channel invasion of France, went up to bat in what Sir Alan Brooke, chief of the imperial general staff, described in his diaries as a "painful meeting" between the Allies' top brass. His patience for Churchill's flimflam – the PM had suggested alternative campaigns in the Greek islands, the Balkans and even Norway – long since worn out, Marshall threw down an ultimatum: either Britain support a full-tilt invasion of France, or the US would drop the 'Germany First' strategy and concentrate all of its effort on defeating the Japanese in the Pacific. Under great secrecy, 1 May 1944 – later changed to 5 June – was nominated as the date in which Operation Overlord would begin. Normandy was chosen as the location over Brittany or the Cotentin Peninsula – both of which would make them vulnerable to encirclement – and the Pas de Calais, which though the shortest distance between Britain and France, was the most heavily fortified. US General Dwight D Eisenhower was appointed commander of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) – effectively all Allied forces in Europe – while British General Bernard Montgomery was named commander of the 21st Army Group, comprising all of 39 divisions taking part in the initial invasion.

D-Day would be the single largest amphibious military operation in the history of warfare, with its three original landing zones expanded to five. First the Americans in Utah and Omaha, then an hour later the British and Canadians in Gold, June and Sword, covering

"D-DAY WOULD BE THE SINGLE LARGEST AMPHIBIOUS MILITARY OPERATION IN THE HISTORY OF WARFARE"

an 80-kilometre (50-mile) stretch of the French coastline. The landing of 150,000 troops by sea, supported by naval bombardment, would be preceded by daring parachute and glider drops further inland. Dropped from the skies above Normandy, 30,000 men of the US 82nd and 101st Airborne along with Canadian and British units of the 6th Airborne Division would be tasked to secure bridges and crossroads, establish river crossings and take out artillery batteries.

As planning intensified, Churchill found himself unable to make direct contact with the US president who he'd once written to so fondly as "your American cousin" and instead was fobbed off with the prickly marshal, the architect of the strategy that was causing the PM such anxiety. "Struck by how very tired and worn out the Prime Minister looks now", wrote Jock Colville, his private secretary.

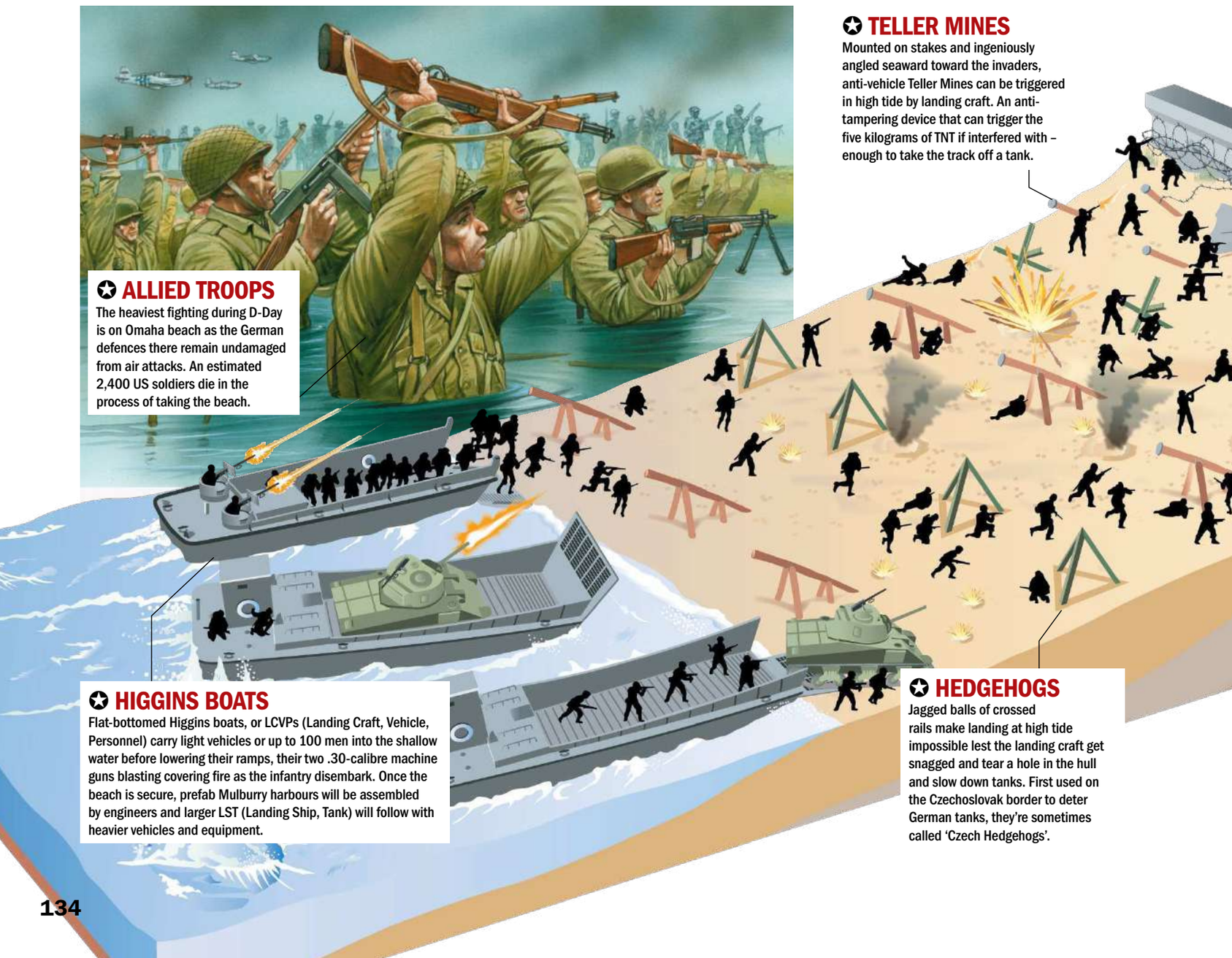
Converted Cunard liners began to disgorge their cargo – both men and the equipment they would need – in preparation, turning the South of England into a vast khaki patchwork of army camps. Between January and June 1944, 700,000 US troops had arrived in Britain, adding to a total of around 2.88 million soldiers billeted around the country. Around 5 per cent of this number would take part in D-Day – the rest would be needed for the campaigns that followed.

"HITLER AND HIS GENERALS REMAINED CONVINCED THAT AN ASSAULT WAS MOST LIKELY TO COME FROM CALAIS, WHERE THEY CONCENTRATED THEIR HEAVY DEFENCES"

When the first US troops arrived in North Africa in November 1942, they were raw. Fresh from basic training and flush with confidence, their learning curve had been steep and costly, but the generals who prepared for D-Day had experienced amphibious landings in Sicily and Italy – albeit not on this scale – and held no illusions about the strength of German defences. Nonetheless, training was thorough and the first large-scale exercise not only revealed systemic weaknesses in the Allied forces, but was a catastrophe on such a scale that D-Day was nearly called off altogether.

Slapton Sands in Devon had been chosen for its resemblance to Utah Beach, and on 22 April 1944, 30,000 troops, plus tanks and landing craft, prepared to take the sand from its defenders, played by the Royal Navy. For the first few days the emphasis was on embarkation, as officers corralled their charges in and out of transport boats, then on 28 April the first full assault began.

Eisenhower had ordered that live ammunition be used in order to get the troops familiar with the sights and sounds of bombardment, and so the HMS Hawkins was due to shell the beach prior to landing. With some of the boats held up, the admiral in charge of the exercise decided to push everything back by 60 minutes, but somehow the information wasn't relayed to all of the landing craft, so hapless soldiers began to the storm the beach right under the Hawkins' booming guns, leading to the deaths of 308 men.



✪ ALLIED TROOPS
The heaviest fighting during D-Day is on Omaha beach as the German defences there remain undamaged from air attacks. An estimated 2,400 US soldiers die in the process of taking the beach.

✪ TELLER MINES
Mounted on stakes and ingeniously angled seaward toward the invaders, anti-vehicle Teller Mines can be triggered in high tide by landing craft. An anti-tampering device that can trigger the five kilograms of TNT if interfered with – enough to take the track off a tank.

✪ HIGGINS BOATS
Flat-bottomed Higgins boats, or LCVPs (Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel) carry light vehicles or up to 100 men into the shallow water before lowering their ramps, their two .30-calibre machine guns blasting covering fire as the infantry disembark. Once the beach is secure, prefab Mulbury harbours will be assembled by engineers and larger LST (Landing Ship, Tank) will follow with heavier vehicles and equipment.

✪ HEDGEHOGS
Jagged balls of crossed rails make landing at high tide impossible lest the landing craft get snagged and tear a hole in the hull and slow down tanks. First used on the Czechoslovak border to deter German tanks, they're sometimes called 'Czech Hedgehogs'.

Worse was to follow. That night, a fleet of bulky LST ('Landing Ship, Tank') ships escorted by the HMS Azalea had set off from Plymouth to Slapton Sands to simulate a channel crossing.

Like ducks, the HMS Azalea led the eight landing craft in single-file across Lyme Bay, when out of the darkness vicious German E-boats – souped-up fast attack craft that prowled the English Channel – opened fire with their torpedoes. Out on a routine patrol, they had been lured toward Lyme Bay by the unusually high British radio traffic. Unwilling to expose just how well defended the bay was and risk the Nazis finding out why it was so closely guarded, the shore batteries remained silent while the HMS Azalea tried to fight them off alone, leading to two landing craft being sunk while two were severely damaged. Unaware of the dangers – the HMS Azalea's crew had no idea the US officers

✪ MACHINE-GUN NEST

Connected to the bunkers and pillboxes by trenches, machine-gun nests guard the trails off the beach, pinning down the attackers from their superior position with suppressing fire from the infamous MG42. Though vulnerable to bombardment by Allied ships and planes, only changing the ammo belt will afford the Allied infantry vital seconds with which to launch an attack.

✪ ARTILLERY CASEMENT

Safely encased in thick concrete, German artillery positions shell Allied ships approaching the beach. Taking them out prior to landing is a crucial part of the early bombardment from sea or air, as not even light tanks have the firepower to dent their shell. Infantry have to take out casements the hard way, getting under the guns to lob grenades into the closely packed rooms or storming the connecting trenches.

✪ LAND MINES

Land mines can be buried beneath the sand to strike the unwary, with infantry mines triggered by a web of tripwires. S-mines, or 'Bouncing Betties', propel themselves 60-120cm (2-4ft) upward on a small explosive charge before the main charge explodes.

✪ BARBED WIRE

Used in vast quantities along seawalls to deny the attackers cover, coils of vicious barbed wire can slow the Allies down as they carefully cut it or flatten it to cross – simple things made more difficult by the hail of machine-gun fire. Loose coils of wire are more difficult to cross as they snare on the unwary.

✪ SEAWALL

The 3m (9.8ft) concrete seawall is as much protection against coastal erosion and unseasonably high tides as it is Allied assault, but it can make exiting the beach difficult for infantry and impossible for vehicles. However, it does provide the attackers with rare shelter from the German guns.

FIELD MARSHAL
BERNARD
MONTGOMERY

British, 1887-1976



Commander of Allied ground forces during Operation Overlord, it was Rommel's rival, Field Marshal Montgomery, who put Eisenhower's plans for D-Day into action. He was heavily criticised by American generals for his failure to capture Caen, the largest city in Normandy.

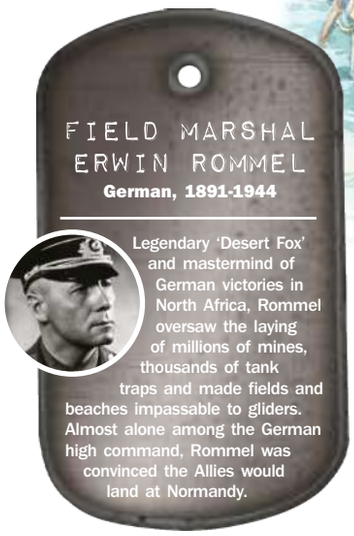


on the LSTs were on a different radio frequency – they were ill-prepared, lifeboats were slow to launch and panicked soldiers put their life jackets on incorrectly, the weight of their packs flipping many over in the water where they drowned face down.

Records show that 198 sailors and 551 soldiers died, but until the bodies could be recovered there were serious fears that officers with intimate knowledge of D-Day had been captured and would divulge the whole plan under the harsh glare of the German interrogation lamps. Operation Overlord hadn't been fatally compromised though, as the officers kept quiet and radio codes were standardised.

Though Hitler and his generals remained convinced that an assault was most likely to come from Calais, where they had concentrated their heavy defences, the 'Desert Fox', Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, who had been sent to France in early 1944 to beef up the defences, saw the vulnerability of Normandy. To the alarm of Allied military planners, who had put together an amazingly detailed mosaic of aerial photographs, coupled with intercepted traffic from Bletchley Park's crack codebreakers, and information on the ground from the French Resistance – the most recent images showed that holes were been dug in fields that had been nominated for glider landings. These holes would be filled with stakes and they'd be wired up to mines, turning the whole landing area into a web of explosive death that would ignite as soon as one wheel touched down, thanks to Rommel's military know-how.

More mines and barbwire were laid on the beaches, trenches were dug and low-lying



Legendary 'Desert Fox' and mastermind of German victories in North Africa, Rommel oversaw the laying of millions of mines, thousands of tank traps and made fields and beaches impassable to gliders. Almost alone among the German high command, Rommel was convinced the Allies would land at Normandy.

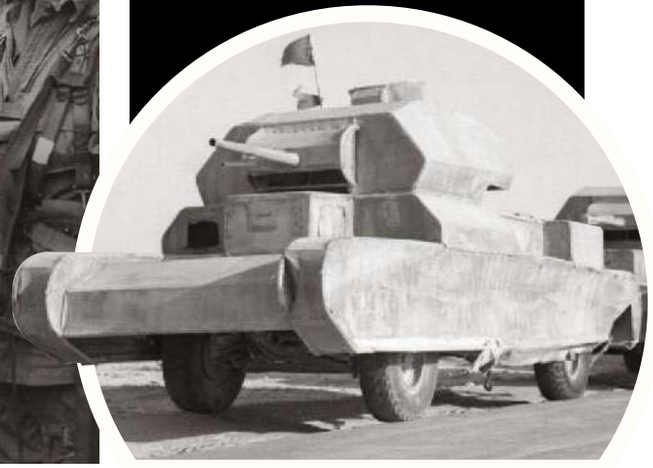
✪ TWO TYPES OF MEN

Joseph Argenzio, who took part in D-Day remembers: "Colonel Taylor, our Regimental Commander, came in and started yelling, 'There's only two kinds of men on this beach, those who are dead and those who are gonna die, so let's get the hell out of here.' The engineers blew the barbed wire and we started up, coming up toward the top of the block hole, fighting our way up."

FOOLING HITLER

Operation Bodyguard was the umbrella term for an elaborate, multi-pronged deception campaign that involved all branches of the armed forces and risked MI5's most valuable double agents.

Inflatable tanks and planes in the Kent fields fooled German reconnaissance planes into thinking that Allies would dash across the channel to Calais, as well as steady bombing raids to soften up a target that would never be hit, while a network of 'trusted' German agents secretly working for British intelligence kept up a misleading flow of information. Intelligence from double agents highlighted a planned invasion of the French Bay of Biscay, another fake army and convenient radio intercepts in Egypt teased a planned invasion via Crete and the Balkans. Right up to D-Day itself – and for days afterward – Hitler and much of the German high command believed Normandy was a diversion – helped by a massive air-drop of dummies over the fields around Calais. Sacks stuffed with straw and accompanied by packages that simulated the sound of gunfire held many divisions of Nazi troops on high alert, north of the real invasion.



"HE WENT FROM GROUP TO GROUP AND SHOOK HANDS WITH AS MANY MEN AS HE COULD. HE SPOKE A FEW WORDS TO EVERY MAN AS HE SHOOK HIS HAND AND WISHED HIM SUCCESS"



General Eisenhower talks to paratroopers in England before D-Day



FIREPOWER

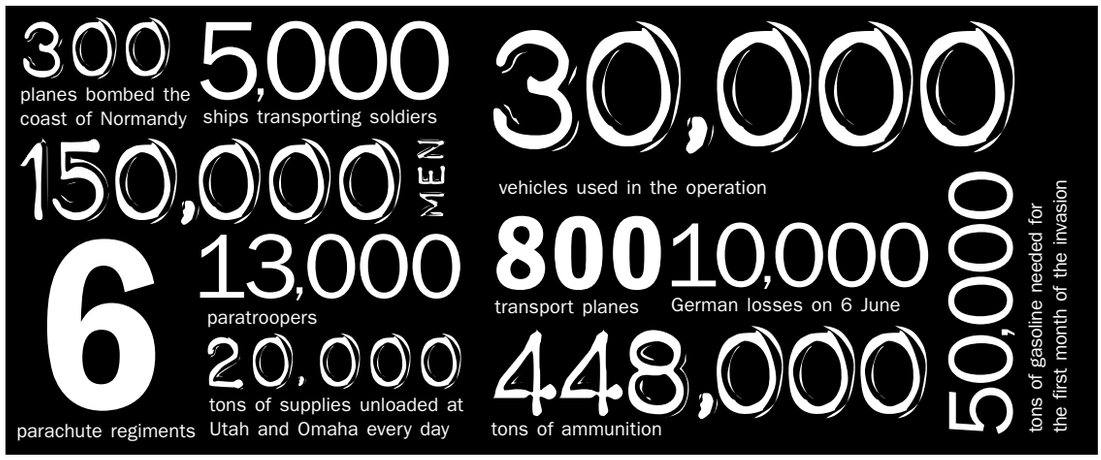
There was a whole host of different weapons used by the Allies and the defenders alike on D-Day, such as the rifle pictured. Anti-tank weapons, flamethrowers, grenades, shotguns and machine guns were also used on the beaches.

fields were flooded to prevent aircraft landing. It was clear that the window for a successful operation was not only closing quickly, but might have already slammed shut. The weather too turned against the Allies and they were forced to hold off, on the advice of the RAF's meteorological experts, for 6 June, where the full moon would give pilots maximum visibility and the low tide would allow the Allies to land their troops well away from Rommel's new killing ground. If they didn't take this shot, the next available opportunity would be weeks away, but with a storm on the horizon and the growing German preparedness, it could be much too late.

Meanwhile in occupied France, German meteorologists had also foreseen a storm, but were so confident that it would hit the French coast much earlier that Rommel returned to Germany for his wife's birthday and to meet with Hitler to plead for more tanks. The Führer believed strongly in the doctrine of 'defence in depth' – holding back his army's strongest units further inland to mount a counterattack, while Rommel and a handful of others believed that the best course of action was to drive their enemy back from the coastline. The Desert Fox knew from his campaigns in North Africa and Italy that once the Allies gained a toehold, their victory was almost certain.

Feverish preparation and anxiety dominated the morning of 5 June 1944. On airfields across England men painted out the markings on transport planes, while over the choppy English Channel, Royal Navy mine-sweepers frantically cleared the path. At 10pm, while the paratroopers of the 101st Airborne sat waiting by their planes at Greenham Common airfield, Eisenhower paid an impromptu visit. "They looked so young and brave", recalled his driver Kay Summersby. "I stood by the car and watched as the general walked among them… He went from group to group and shook hands with as many men as he could. He spoke a few words to every man as he shook his hand and wished him success." He later confessed "it's very hard to look a soldier in the eye when you fear that you are sending him to his death."

D-DATA



German defences



Fortress

WEAPONS: Connected to numerous smaller pillboxes by trenches or concrete tunnels, they could boast a huge array of artillery and machine guns, and firing positions for infantry.
STRENGTH: Heavily fortified networks of concrete and steel, they were impervious to tank and light artillery. Often manned by the fanatical Waffen SS rather than regular Wehrmacht soldiers, the defenders would often fight to the last man.
WEAKNESS: Being positioned where they could defend French ports left them exposed to attack.



Pillbox

WEAPONS: Mostly used for machine guns, but also designed for anti-tank guns or mortars, while firing slots existed for infantry riflemen.
STRENGTH: Encased in concrete and steel, they were impervious to the small artillery and tank fire from the forces coming ashore.
WEAKNESS: Confined spaces made them vulnerable to flame throwers, satchel charges and grenades lobbed through the firing slots.



Minefield

WEAPONS: Usually mixed anti-tank 'T-mines' and anti-personnel 'S-mines', many attached to tripwires or concrete anti-tank barriers.
STRENGTH: Aside from the sheer devastation caused, the threat of mines could slow advance to a crawl and leave the attackers demoralised.
WEAKNESS: The shifting sands could often move or bury mines even deeper, and they couldn't be relied upon to detonate.

While Eisenhower dashed from runway to runway, Sir Alan Brooke scratched his fears in his diary, that "it may well be the most ghastly disaster of the whole war. I wish to God it were safely over."

Somewhere around 6am, rifles barked death in the grey light as the men of the 101st Airborne battled on through the morning. With his comrades scattered across the fields, he had joined an ad hoc unit, full of men he barely recognised – every few minutes, rustling in the undergrowth would precede an urgent whisper of "Flash!" and the reply, "Thunder!", and more paratroopers would join their band. It didn't matter that the officer leading them wasn't his or that he'd twisted his ankle in the drop, they had secured their objective. The beach exits were safe and the army landing at Utah could concentrate on the enemy in front of them, not the enemy around the corner.

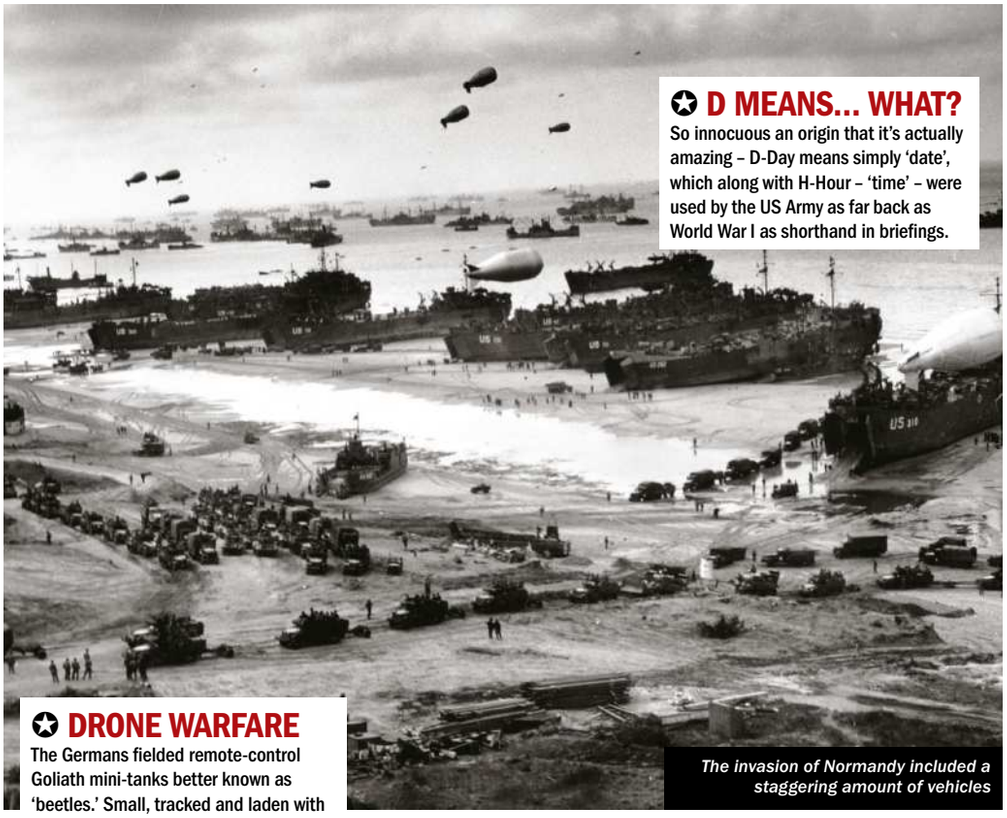
The soldier hadn't noticed the water turn to sand as the 8th Infantry collided with Utah Beach, but he knew when to stop running. His lungs raw and his breathing heavy, he crouched at the foot of the incline – with the machine-gun nests silenced it was a sanctuary. Bodies floated in the water or lay face down in the sand behind him, but already units were forming as officers barked orders, checking their weapons and moving them on up and over the sand. Some lit cigarettes, others joked with nervous relief. There were other battles to fight. He exhaled slowly, hefted his pack and started moving forward.

Hours later and a world away, Winston Churchill stepped up to the dispatch box, the Commons roaring in approval. His features softened, a slight smile dancing at the corner of his mouth. Away from the behind-the-scenes tussles for control, of the set-backs and the catastrophes, and of the gut-wrenching dread of the night before, this old warhorse was finally back on the battlefield. "I have also to announce to the House", he rumbled, growing with every vowel, "that during the night and the early hours of this morning the first of the series of landings in force upon the European continent has taken place…"



Members of a Polish tank regiment scan the horizon

15 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT D-DAY



The invasion of Normandy included a staggering amount of vehicles

✪ D MEANS… WHAT?

So innocuous an origin that it's actually amazing – D-Day means simply 'date', which along with H-Hour – 'time' – were used by the US Army as far back as World War I as shorthand in briefings.

✪ DRONE WARFARE

The Germans fielded remote-control Goliath mini-tanks better known as 'beetles.' Small, tracked and laden with high explosives, they were steered by a joystick into tanks and tightly packed infantry. They were of limited effect.



British soldiers inspect three captured 'beetles'

✪ FRIENDS IN THE AIR

Although primarily concerned with the Pacific War in 1944, the Royal Australian Air Force and Royal New Zealand Air Force both provided air support for the D-Day landings.



An Australian Spitfire at RAF Redhill in Surrey, returned from a raid over Northern France



A Russian Cossack volunteer in German Army uniform, not unlike those who fought at Normandy

✪ THE OTHER ALLIES

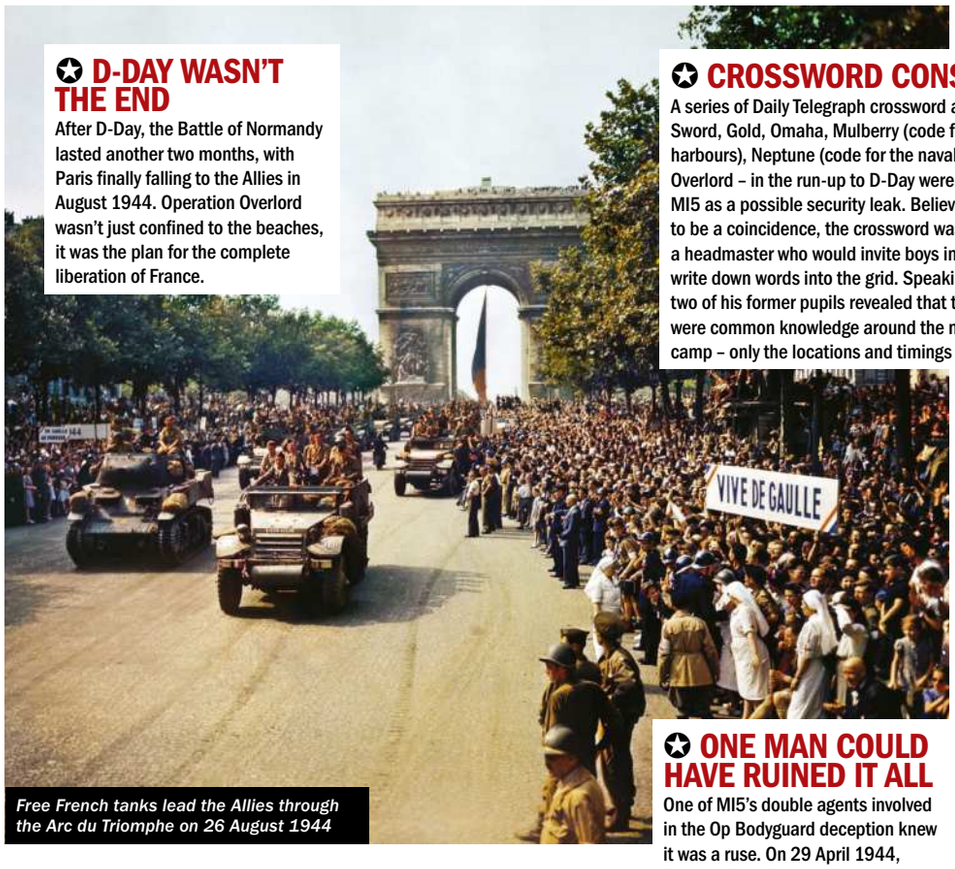
One regiment of Free French and one regiment of Polish Armed Forces In The West also took part in the Battle of Normandy, as well as forces from the Belgian, Greek, Czechoslovakian, Norwegian and Dutch armies in exile.

✪ THE OTHER AXIS

German troops weren't alone in defending Normandy on D-Day either. The Wehrmacht's 709th and 243rd Static Infantry Division was comprised of former Soviet POWs, as well as conscripts and volunteers from Poland and Georgia.

✪ D-DAY WASN'T THE END

After D-Day, the Battle of Normandy lasted another two months, with Paris finally falling to the Allies in August 1944. Operation Overlord wasn't just confined to the beaches, it was the plan for the complete liberation of France.



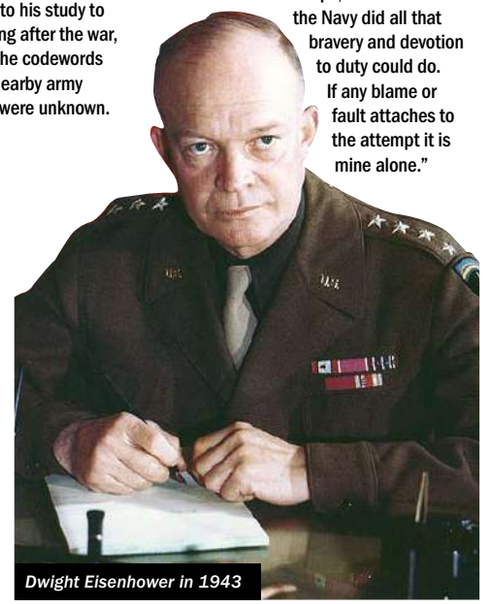
Free French tanks lead the Allies through the Arc du Triomphe on 26 August 1944

✪ CROSSWORD CONSPIRACY?

A series of Daily Telegraph crossword answers – Juno, Sword, Gold, Omaha, Mulberry (code for the prefab harbours), Neptune (code for the naval assault) and Overlord – in the run-up to D-Day were investigated by MI5 as a possible security leak. Believed at the time to be a coincidence, the crossword was compiled by a headmaster who would invite boys into his study to write down words into the grid. Speaking after the war, two of his former pupils revealed that the codewords were common knowledge around the nearby army camp – only the locations and timings were unknown.

✪ EISENHOWER PREPARES FOR FAILURE

Eisenhower prepared a speech, which he would give along with his resignation if D-Day failed: "The troops, the air and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone."



Dwight Eisenhower in 1943

✪ ONE MAN COULD HAVE RUINED IT ALL

One of MI5's double agents involved in the Op Bodyguard deception knew it was a ruse. On 29 April 1944, German-born Johnny Jebsen was kidnapped from Portugal, drugged and taken to Berlin where he was tortured in the Gestapo HQ, before being sent to a concentration camp (his arrival was registered along with his broken ribs), from where he simply disappeared. He took the secret of D-Day to his grave.

A German U-boat earlier in WWII

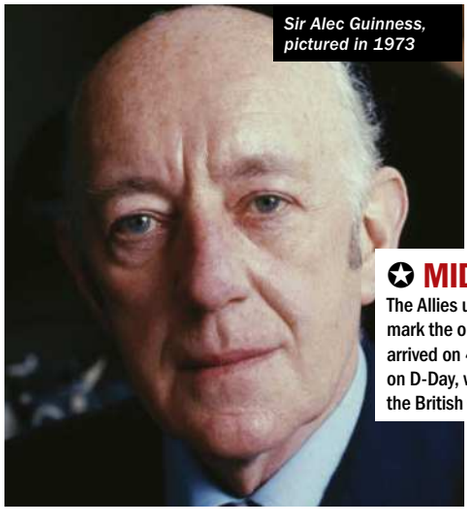


✪ HITLER'S KAMIKAZE U-BOATS

Hitler ordered U-Boat captains to proceed full speed to Normandy and fire all their torpedoes before ramming their vessels into Allied battleships. No U-Boats were near enough to take advantage of this suicide mission.



A member of the French resistance with a US soldier in 1944



Sir Alec Guinness, pictured in 1973

✪ SENDING THE PRISONERS TO TEXAS

From D-Day and through to the Battle of Normandy, the US Army sent 30,000 prisoners a month to POW camps in Texas – the single largest concentration of German POWs in the US.

✪ THE FRENCH RESISTANCE WENT ALL OUT

In the run-up to D-Day the French Resistance delivered 3,000 written reports and 700 radio reports on German defenses in Normandy, and the night before D-Day they launched a massive attack, cutting phone lines, blowing up ammo dumps, ambushing convoys, assassinating senior Nazi officers and disabling over 40 German trains. Thanks to them, German reinforcements were held up.

✪ MIDGET SUBS LED THE WAY

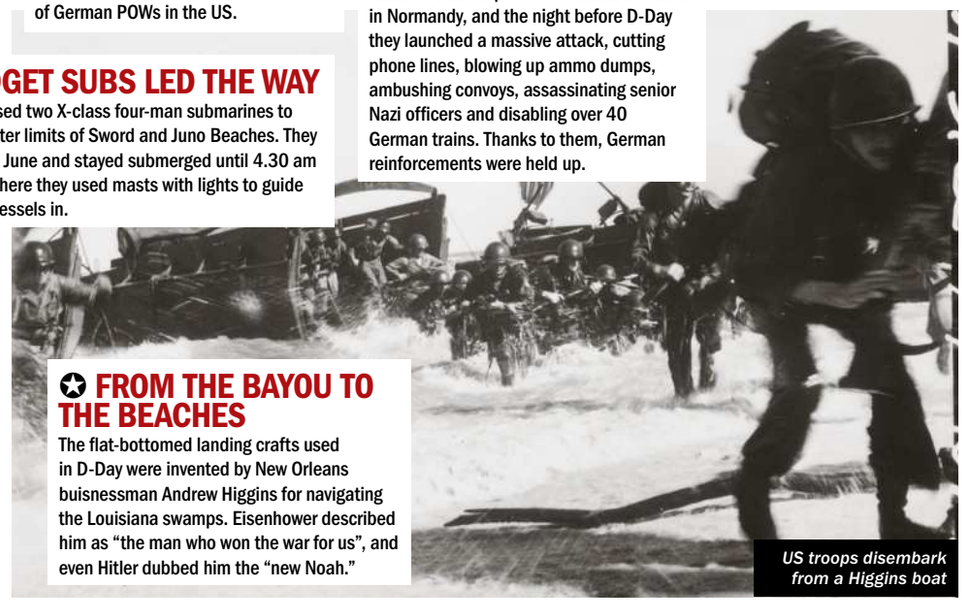
The Allies used two X-class four-man submarines to mark the outer limits of Sword and Juno Beaches. They arrived on 4 June and stayed submerged until 4.30 am on D-Day, where they used masts with lights to guide the British vessels in.

✪ FAMOUS FACES ON THE BEACHES

The Catcher In The Rye author JD Salinger fought at D-Day in the US Signal Corps; Star Wars and The Bridge On The River Kwai actor Alec Guinness was a seaman on a D-Day landing craft; Star Trek actor James Doohan was an officer in the Canadian Army and one of the first onto Juno Beach; while The Longest Day and Tora, Tora, Tora director John Ford witnessed the troops land as a US Navy officer on board the USS Plunkett and filmed newsreel footage on the beach.

✪ FROM THE BAYOU TO THE BEACHES

The flat-bottomed landing crafts used in D-Day were invented by New Orleans buisnessman Andrew Higgins for navigating the Louisiana swamps. Eisenhower described him as "the man who won the war for us", and even Hitler dubbed him the "new Noah."



US troops disembark from a Higgins boat

© Ian Moores Graphics; Thinkstock


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ICONIC MOMENT

PRISONERS OF WAR

German POWs are escorted across the beaches of Normandy. The attack was a key part in a larger plan to capture German-occupied Europe

1944

BATTLE OF GOOSE GREEN

FALKLAND ISLANDS, 28-29 MAY 1982

Deep in the South Atlantic lies a cluster of sparsely populated, windswept islands. For many years, the Falklands were a forgotten corner of Britain's once vast colonial empire. Located over 8,000 miles away, much of the UK's population were even unaware of its existence. All that was to change on 2 April 1982 when Argentina invaded and occupied the islands, much to the distress of the largely British population. Three days later, a British Task Force was dispatched to retake the islands and, on 21 May, 4,000 men of 3 Commando Brigade landed at San Carlos Water on the west coast of East Falkland.

500 of these soldiers belonged to the 2nd Battalion, the Parachute Regiment – commonly known as '2 Para' – elite troops under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Jones, known to his men as 'H'. Under him were four companies of 100-130 men each, named A, B, C and D. The commander of D Company was a 36-year-old major called Philip Neame. Shortly after arriving on East Falkland, Neame was far from encouraged by the "cold, wet and boggy" surroundings. After landing at San Carlos, 2 Para had to ascend Sussex Mountain in order to secure the beachhead, before making their way to the next objective: Goose Green.

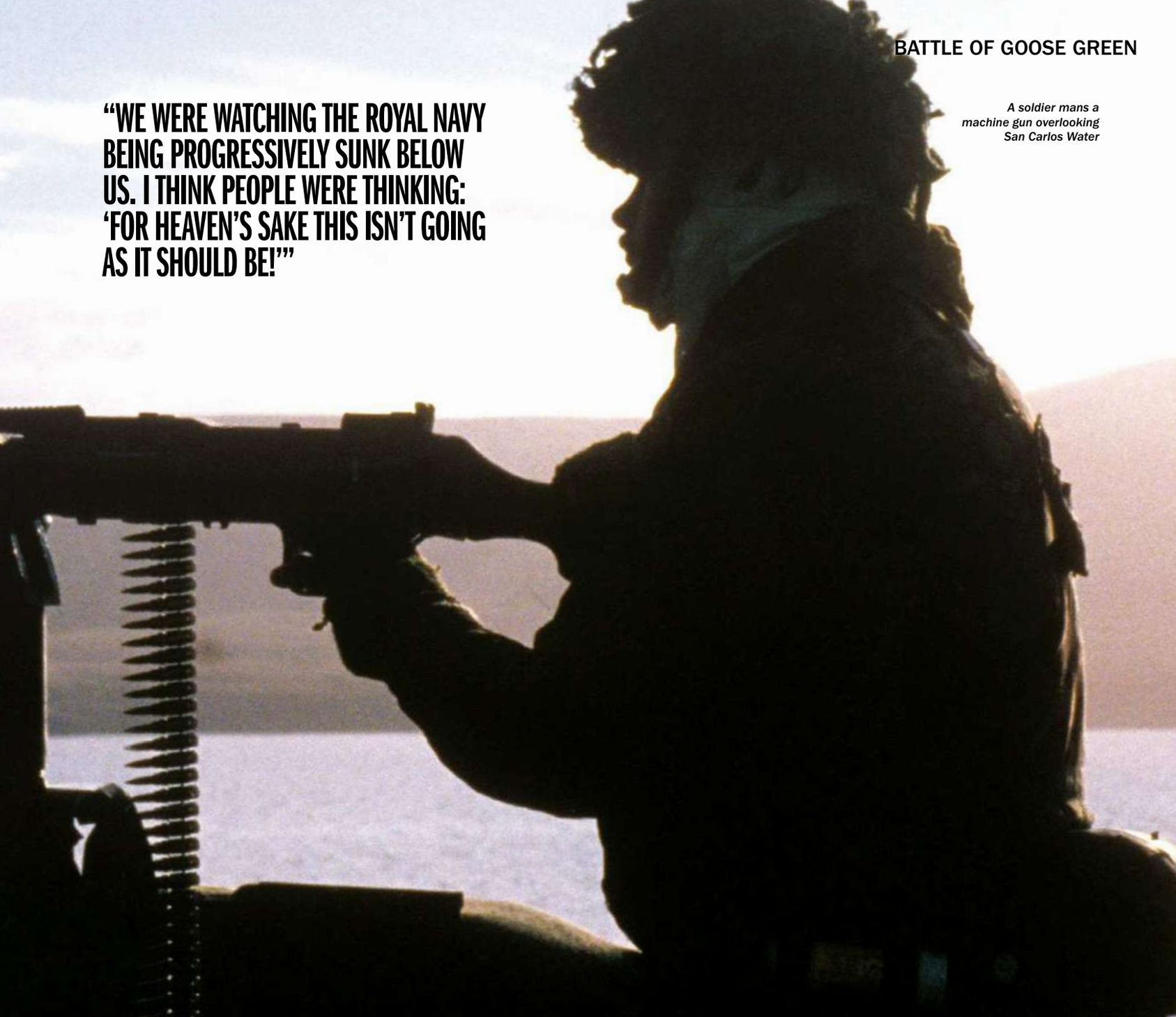
Difficult preparations

Goose Green is the third largest settlement on the Falkland Islands, positioned on a narrow isthmus connecting the north and south portions of East Falkland. The Argentinians were in control of an airstrip at this position and had placed 1,200 troops there to protect it. If left unchecked, this enemy stronghold would threaten the British advance towards the capital of Stanley, on the east coast of the island.

Fresh off the boat, Neame and his men immediately encountered problems while climbing Sussex Mountain. "We were carrying 80-120 pounds of ammunition. Trying to get up onto the hill was a complete nightmare. It

OPPOSING FORCES

BRITISH		ARGENTINIAN
LEADER	VS	LEADER
Lieutenant Colonel Herbert 'H' Jones		Lieutenant Colonel Ítalo Piaggi
INFANTRY		INFANTRY
500 men of 2nd Battalion Parachute Regiment		1,000 men of 12th Infantry Regiment



A soldier mans a machine gun overlooking San Carlos Water

"WE WERE WATCHING THE ROYAL NAVY BEING PROGRESSIVELY SUNK BELOW US. I THINK PEOPLE WERE THINKING: 'FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE THIS ISN'T GOING AS IT SHOULD BE!'"

was really atrocious going and we began to accept that the boots we had weren't up to the job. The old boots were soaking up the water like blotting paper and within a few days people were beginning to suffer from trench foot. On Sussex Mountain itself, we were sitting effectively on a peat bog. It was like the Crimea, sitting in these pretty dire conditions for five days." Worse still, the men were soon helpless observers as British ships were attacked by wave after wave of enemy fast jets. "We were watching the Royal Navy being progressively sunk below us. I think people were thinking: 'For heaven's sake this isn't going as it should be!'"

To capture Goose Green, the British needed a secure command centre, which was remotely located at Camilla Creek House, nearly 20 kilometres south of Sussex Mountain. "We were the nearest battalion to Goose Green and the furthest away from Stanley," Neame remembers. "On 26 May I was given orders by 'H' [Colonel Jones] to go and secure Camilla Creek as an assembly area. This was the second time we'd been given the task, having already ridden halfway there before and the mission had been cancelled. I effectively led the battalion into Camilla Creek. It was a farmhouse with a few outbuildings. It was the first shelter we'd seen for a week or so. We piled in there. The rest of the battalion came in behind us expecting to find some room. It did get very crowded; one of my platoons was crammed into the downstairs loo!"

During the night spent at Camilla Creek, the BBC World Service – which was closely reporting on the war – accidentally made life even more difficult for 2 Para. "In the middle of the night we picked up that the BBC had rather cleverly announced to the world that there was now a parachute battalion within a few miles of Goose Green. It didn't specifically give away our position but it wasn't going to take the brains of a bishop to work out where we might be. 'H' quite sensibly gave the order at first light to disperse into the peat."

Although the BBC's announcement inadvertently gave the Argentinians extra preparation time, Neame doesn't entirely blame the renowned broadcasters. "It was actually reporting an announcement made in Parliament, so perhaps it's not fair to put the

"ON SUSSEX MOUNTAIN ITSELF, WE WERE SITTING EFFECTIVELY ON A PEAT BOG. IT WAS LIKE THE CRIMEA, SITTING IN THESE PRETTY DIRE CONDITIONS FOR FIVE DAYS"

entire blame on the BBC but on Parliamentary procedure as well. The government was under fairly desperate pressure to let the public know that things were happening and we were going to go on the offensive."

The announcement also changed the tone of the upcoming fight for the men of 2 Para, adding a new level of pressure to their operation. "It was going to be the first major all-arm attack at night since Korea that the British Army had been engaged in, so there was a certain amount of apprehension. That was obviously increased by the BBC's announcement. When you looked at the ground, a narrow isthmus didn't allow much room for manoeuvre. It was initially described as a 'raid' on Goose Green but over time the mission got elevated to 'recovering the settlement'".

Despite this elevation, the Paratroopers were short on air and artillery support thanks to Argentinian air attacks on the supply ships in San Carlos. "We went out with half a battery of guns when normally we'd expect a full battery and when you haven't got the helicopters to hand out the ammunition there's no point using the guns either." Neame recalls there was little complacency. "I remember my sergeant-major saying before the battle, 'This is going to be a hard knock on the door and they'll collapse.' And I remember saying, 'Well it might just be that but if not then it's going to be a bloody hard day!'"



D Company aboard MV Norland in May 1982. Phil Neame is located in the middle of the back row. Three more companies of this size was the entire strength of the British force at Goose Green

"IT WAS INITIALLY DESCRIBED AS A 'RAID' ON GOOSE GREEN BUT OVER TIME THE MISSION GOT ELEVATED TO 'RECOVERING THE SETTLEMENT"

For many in 2 Para, the coming fight would be their first experience of battle, including Neame: "For most people it was certainly the first time. Most people in the battalion had Northern Ireland experience, but that is not in any sense comparable with an all-arms battle. I had Northern Ireland experience and one of our company commanders had extensive experience of all-arms fighting in the Dhofar War in Oman in the early Seventies. I'd been involved on the edges of that so I had some experience of engagement but not of the intensity that were about to encounter."

First shots

On paper, the odds were unfavourable for 2 Para; outnumbered two-to-one by up to 800 enemy combatants on the ground, with 1,200 close by in reserve. The Argentinian infantry, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Ítalo Piaggi, had dug themselves in well, forming a line of entrenched machine-gun positions on Darwin Hill. This position was 30 metres high and overlooked both its namesake settlement and beyond, Goose Green itself. This posed a formidable obstacle for the British to overcome. To take it on, 2 Para would begin their assault in the dark, supported by naval fire from the Royal Navy.

On 28 May at 3.35am, HMS Arrow opened up a salvo of shellfire on the Argentinian positions, while 2 Para cautiously crept forward under the cover of darkness, stumbling over the soggy and featureless ground of the isthmus. A

Moving into the Falklands: soldiers aboard the HMS Hermes prepare to transfer to other ships for deployment

THE ARGENTINE ARMY

BATTLING THE COLD AND HUNGER, ARGENTINIAN CONSCRIPTS FACED SEASONED BRITISH PARATROOPERS



Soldiers carrying FN FAL rifles, MAG58 machine guns and 90mm recoilless rifles

The defenders of Goose Green were principally drawn from the Argentine Army's 12th Infantry Regiment, over two-thirds comprised of young conscripts serving their year's national service, most with less than a month's military training.

They were poorly equipped, without suitable cold weather clothing, and were plagued by food shortages. Compounding this, the Argentine officer class was known as inefficient and unprofessional, with many political appointees. Worse, conscripts feared non-commissioning officers for their brutality toward junior soldiers.

Despite this, and a noted lack of cohesion in comparison with the well-trained British forces, some elements of the 12th Infantry fought with distinction at Goose Green. The Argentine soldiers showed a considerable understanding of the terrain they were fighting on, with well-sited machine gun, anti-aircraft weaponry and infantry fighting positions that would prove costly for the British attackers. Although many of the conscripts were hesitant during the battle and played little part in the final outcome, others fought courageously.

"THE ARGENTINES SHOWED A CONSIDERABLE UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERRAIN WITH WELL-SITED MACHINE GUNS, ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONRY AND INFANTRY FIGHTING POSITIONS"

The Argentine defenders were also well armed with ten FN MAG general purpose machine guns, a .50 Browning heavy machine gun, three recoilless rifles, a number of 81mm and 120mm mortars and a battery of three 105mm howitzers firing in direct support. Additionally, an Argentine Air Force unit equipped with two 35mm and six 20mm anti-aircraft cannon had been repositioned to fire against ground targets.

The Argentines had very little advance warning of the operation to retake Goose Green and Darwin, but were expecting an attack from the direction of San Carlos, dangerously overextending their defences. Incredibly, the British Defence Secretary announced in Parliament that 2 Para were advancing on Goose Green, before the battle.

His announcement was quickly picked up by the BBC World Service. The Argentines thankfully dismissed his claim as strategic misdirection, incredulous that the British would be so stupid as to announce their intentions in such a manner.



Argentine soldiers dig in and position a 120mm mortar in the Falklands, possibly close to Goose Green

Company approached Burntside House at the north-east end of the isthmus believing it to be occupied by Argentine soldiers. However, on arrival they found there were only four unhurt civilians. At 4.10am, B Company advanced down the right flank of the isthmus with D Company following them along the middle ground. At this early stage, Neame felt the battle was going well. "I have to say that every night engagement, and there had been two or three before daylight emerged, we were going through them like butter. They were not really trained or experienced in that sort of condition. A lot of the Argentinians were hiding at the bottom of their trenches with their sleeping bags over their heads. It was almost as though they were wishing they weren't there."

However, before long HMS Arrow suffered a mechanical failure with its guns and the Paratroopers lost their fire support. Worse still, the four companies were losing contact with one another in the darkness, which became a serious problem towards dawn. "It started to get difficult at daylight. What had gone wrong was that after an attack, the time taken to reorganise was much longer than we had been expecting," Neame recalls. "It was very dark and people were being pulled in every direction. The whole reorganisation was a complete nightmare. We should have been at the settlements by daylight and by daylight we were barely a third of the way there. As soon as daylight came up, the boot went completely on the Argentinian foot because of the huge streams of fire in very open countryside. That was when life became seriously difficult…"

In fact, 2 Para's problems had already begun during the night including for Neame's D Company on the right flank of the British line. "We had four casualties in our first attack," explains Neame, "it was utter confusion. We were opened up on by several machine guns. These positions were between where I was then and B Company's position. We had to get through them to get to B Company; I mean it was complete chaos! My control was then frankly minimal, you had to rely on the initiatives of platoon commanders to try and decide what you were trying to deal with."

'H' Jones

As Neame's men struggled with the disorientating contact with the enemy, other companies began experiencing difficulties of their own. Both flanks of paratroopers slowed their advance. To the west B Company came up against the Argentine fortified position at Boca House and D Company became engaged in a series of confused clashes with entrenched enemy positions. A Company also found itself pinned down by sniper and machine gun fire from Darwin Hill. Trapped and exposed in the open, paratroopers began to fall to the relentless gunfire one after another.

Monitoring the events as they unfolded from his base of operations, Colonel Jones became increasingly frustrated with how slowly the battle was progressing. He moved to join A Company on the left-most British flank, to take a more direct involvement in the fight, declaring: "Right, I'm not having this!" and moved his ten-man tactical team along the edge of the Darwin inlet before sheltering in a gulley near the Argentine positions. The enemy machine guns were positioned in a jagged pattern along the hill, giving the defenders a broad line of sight and making a paratrooper advance nearly impossible.

Concerned that the element of surprise had been lost and that the British were losing the initiative, Jones took a desperately courageous action. At approximately 9.30am, armed with a sub-machine gun and calling on his men to follow him, he charged the nearest enemy position. Unfortunately, in the confusion of battle, Jones's command went largely unheard and he charged the Argentinians alone while firing his gun. He was mortally wounded just metres from his target. With their commanding officer down, A Company continued to fire on the entrenched positions but 20 minutes were

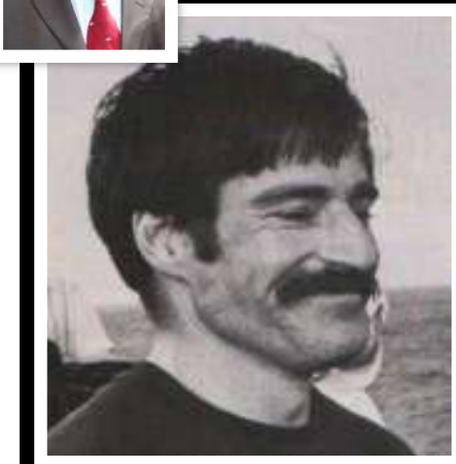
"IT WAS VERY DARK AND PEOPLE WERE BEING PULLED IN EVERY DIRECTION. THE WHOLE REORGANISATION WAS A COMPLETE NIGHTMARE"

PHILIP NEAME

THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF D COMPANY, 2 PARA, DURING THE BATTLE

After service in Northern Ireland Phil Neame commanded D Company as a Major in 2 Para during the Falklands War. He was mentioned in dispatches during the conflict for his actions. From 1990-92 he commanded 10 Para in the Territorial Army. He retired from the army in 1994 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel after 20 years in the Parachute Regiment and six years in the RAF Regiment. Since then Neame founded and is a trustee for the Ulysses Trust. In 2014 he was awarded the Points of Light Award by Prime Minister David Cameron for his outstanding contributions to volunteering.





Phil Neame in 1982 and (inset, left) today



Royal Marines in Ajax Bay waiting to go on patrol

"TRAPPED AND EXPOSED IN THE OPEN, PARATROOPERS BEGAN TO FALL TO THE RELENTLESS GUNFIRE ONE AFTER ANOTHER"

'H' JONES

2 PARA'S COMMANDING OFFICER LED FROM THE FRONT, BUT PAID THE ULTIMATE PRICE

The circumstances around Jones's death have since aroused controversy and criticism in some quarters, with some arguing that he should not have charged alone and left his men without their commanding officer. However Neame's assessment of the man reveals a sometimes difficult but ultimately exceptional officer: "I think everyone acknowledged that he wasn't the easiest person to work with, he was very volatile but he could also be very warm, very thoughtful."

Jones was a stubborn man, but would listen to suggestions. "I remember he gave one instruction: we were going to fight this the modern way, there'd be no need for bayonets. My Toms [British Army slang for 'soldier'] were most upset at the thought they wouldn't be able to take their bayonets. The only way I could persuade him was to say, 'They really want them as tin openers.' That was laughable but it gave him the room to back down gracefully. So he said, 'Well alright then if they want them as tin openers take them!' So you had to manage him a bit but he really was a most aggressive, mission-focussed officer."

Neame is clear that Jones's leadership was vital to the course of the battle: "His contribution, in my view, was before the battle. He absolutely got this battalion thinking, 'Nothing is going to stop us,' to the level of complete faith that we were going to overcome all odds and difficulties. It must have been a pretty testing moment. Showing courage in the heat of battle is one thing, keeping calm in the moments before is much more demanding in many ways. He must have been feeling pretty queasy on occasions but if he did he didn't show it. In this sense he showed real leadership, just instilling us with complete faith that we were going to do it."

For Neame, Jones's actions were typical behaviour: "A lot has been said about his involvement around A Company and the manner of his death and I suppose the trouble is that was the sort of chap he was. To him there was only one way of leading and that was leading from the front. He wouldn't ask the Toms to do something that he wasn't prepared to do himself. I think in retrospect it was a mistake, he got himself too involved in A Company's battle which meant he lost the overall perspective of the battlefield. I think that's what was going wrong but it was totally in the character of the man."

When Neame heard about Jones's wounding, he took the news pragmatically. "No one's jaw dropped. You didn't read, 'Commander of the battalion is dead, battle shattered.' Nothing like that happened because we all knew 'H'; he was a very visible man. What you saw was what you got. The fact that he had died in this way I don't think was a great surprise. I think everyone was saying, 'The old bugger's going to get it one time'. People took that very much in their stride."



This memorial marks the spot where H. Jones fell

to pass before help was able to reach Jones, who subsequently died of his wounds. For his actions, he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

While all this was happening, the emergence of daylight allowed the Argentinians to fly in reinforcements using helicopters and to harass any British air attempts to assist 2 Para. For example, a Royal Marine Scout helicopter was shot down by Pucaras aircraft while it was on its way to rescue the mortally wounded Jones.

The lieutenant-colonel's death increased the urgency that Darwin Hill had to be taken quickly. In an attempt to dislodge the Argentinians from their superior positions, Corporal David Abols crept up and fired two rocket-propelled grenades at the command bunker. Despite bullets raining down around him, Abols scored a direct hit. This action led to the capture of Darwin Hill and many Argentinians surrendered. For his bravery Abols was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

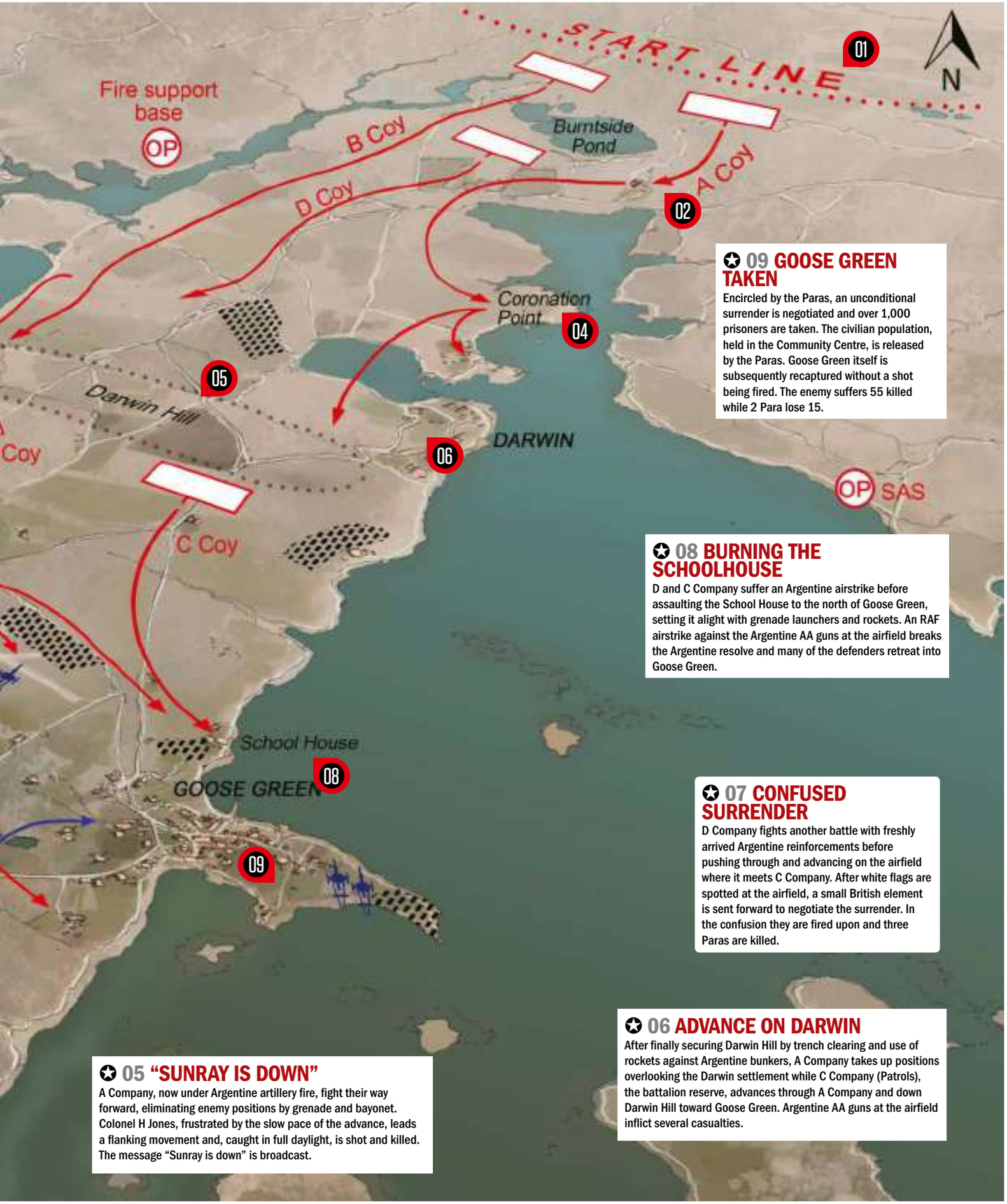
Jones's actions altered Neame's decisions for D Company: "The impact for me was that I decided that nothing was going to happen while all this head-butting operation around Darwin Hill with A Company and the Argentinians was going on. That was going to take a while, in my book. I'd taken the view that nothing was going to be coming my way for probably an hour and I told the company to 'get a brew on'."

What this meant was the unusual sight of D Company having breakfast on the battlefield. "It's not the sort of thing you'd be encouraged to do. It'd be seen as [being] a bit cavalier about things but in my view this was now going to be a very long day and we hadn't eaten since 12 hours previously. It struck me as being the most useful thing that I could actually do to make sure there was going to be enough in the body to keep us going for a battle that was going to last until the end of the day as far as I could see."

Despite the need to re-fuel, Neame soon found that feeding his men became a secondary priority. "I got a brew of porridge on and that was the difficulty. Just as we got the announcement 'H' was down, the porridge had just come to the boil. I was just about to have my first mouthful and Chris Keeble [Major Christopher Keeble who had taken over command of 2 Para after H Jones's death] got on the net and said 'Try and join B Company' and suddenly what I thought was going to be an hour of relative inactivity for our company was brought to an end." Some of Neame's men were initially perplexed by their officer's actions: "We were rather eating on the go, we must have looked a sight! I think one or two initially looked and thought, 'Hang on, has he lost the plot?' And then of course they realised, 'Actually, well why the hell not?' It made sense."

"A ROYAL MARINE SCOUT HELICOPTER WAS SHOT DOWN BY PUCARAS AIRCRAFT WHILE IT WAS ON ITS WAY TO RESCUE THE MORTALLY WOUNDED JONES"





✪ 09 GOOSE GREEN TAKEN

Encircled by the Paras, an unconditional surrender is negotiated and over 1,000 prisoners are taken. The civilian population, held in the Community Centre, is released by the Paras. Goose Green itself is subsequently recaptured without a shot being fired. The enemy suffers 55 killed while 2 Para lose 15.

✪ 08 BURNING THE SCHOOLHOUSE

D and C Company suffer an Argentine airstrike before assaulting the School House to the north of Goose Green, setting it alight with grenade launchers and rockets. An RAF airstrike against the Argentine AA guns at the airfield breaks the Argentine resolve and many of the defenders retreat into Goose Green.

✪ 07 CONFUSED SURRENDER

D Company fights another battle with freshly arrived Argentine reinforcements before pushing through and advancing on the airfield where it meets C Company. After white flags are spotted at the airfield, a small British element is sent forward to negotiate the surrender. In the confusion they are fired upon and three Paras are killed.

✪ 06 ADVANCE ON DARWIN

After finally securing Darwin Hill by trench clearing and use of rockets against Argentine bunkers, A Company takes up positions overlooking the Darwin settlement while C Company (Patrols), the battalion reserve, advances through A Company and down Darwin Hill toward Goose Green. Argentine AA guns at the airfield inflict several casualties.

✪ 05 "SUNRAY IS DOWN"

A Company, now under Argentine artillery fire, fight their way forward, eliminating enemy positions by grenade and bayonet. Colonel H Jones, frustrated by the slow pace of the advance, leads a flanking movement and, caught in full daylight, is shot and killed. The message "Sunray is down" is broadcast.

Boca House

It was now around midday. Darwin Hill had been taken and held by A Company and at the same time the fighting focussed around Argentinian positions at Boca House, a derelict farm west of Darwin Hill. B Company had been fighting near this position since dawn but had been forced to push back a little. In order to try and help B Company Boca House became D Company's new objective: "I tried to join B Company who were on the hill on the gorse line. We started attracting point-fire machine gun fire from the area, although I couldn't quite see it then," explains Neame. "So I decided it was pointless trying to find B Company because we'd end up pinned down on a forward slope. I pulled back and made my suggestion to Chris Keeble that it'd be worth seeing if we could do some outflanking along the western shoreline of the isthmus."

After finally linking up with B Company and obtaining a wire-guided anti-tank missile called a 'Milan', the British went on the attack. "We were able to set up a double act with the Milan blasting these five machine gun positions, not on Boca House but the feature above it. The survivors tried to crawl out, and under cover we were able to engage with them. Within a short space of time the white flags started flying." Surrender was a preferable option for 2 Para. "We were thinking, 'If we can take the surrender it's going to save time but, more importantly, save very valuable ammunition,'" explains Neame. "The ammunition was restricted to what we could carry. I persuaded Keeble that if we don't make a decision soon we're going to be cut off by the tide, which was a complete figment really but it got a decision at least!"

The surrender itself was a tense moment as the British were unsure if they were being lured into a trap: "It was a very long ten minute walk over completely exposed ground, literally with our hearts in our mouths because in that situation you're never absolutely sure whether it's a real surrender. But we did get on it without the enemy opening up on us and there was a relative scene of destruction in front of us."

When D and B Company arrived to take the enemy surrender, they found a chaotic scene: "There was a lot of Argentinian injured; most of



"AS WE LOOKED OUT TOWARDS GOOSE GREEN WE COULD SEE A SCORE OF ENEMY SOLDIERS HOT-LEGGING IT ACROSS THE AIRFIELD LITERALLY ON THE RUN LED BY SOMEBODY WE ASSUMED WAS THE COMPANY COMMANDER ON A TRACTOR"

OPERATION CORPORATE

BRITAIN'S LAST COLONIAL WAR, 8,000 MILES FROM HOME

The Argentine junta invaded the Falkland Islands on 2 April 1982 in an effort to deflect domestic criticism of its regime. The sovereignty of Islas Malvinas, as they are known in Argentina, has long been disputed, although the Islanders themselves identify as British. On 5 April, Prime Minister Thatcher ordered a military task force to retake the islands by force.

With winter fast approaching, distance was not the sole challenge facing this task force, and, in addition, a rigid blockade of the islands was needed to isolate the Argentine forces. Incredibly, considering the scale of the undertaking, the task force sailed just three days after the Argentine invasion.

Six weeks later, 3 Commando Brigade landed at San Carlos under intense Argentine air attacks and 2 Para won the bloody Battle of Goose Green. This was a huge morale boost after the loss of task force ships to bombs and Argentine Exocet missiles.

In June, the major offensive to recapture the Islands begins with 3 Para capturing Mount Longdon, the Royal Marines securing Two Sisters and Mount Harriet. The Scots Guards took the strategic Mount Tumbledown overlooking the capitol, Stanley. The Argentines surrendered on 14 June 1982. In total, the war cost the lives of some 255 British and 650 Argentine servicemen.



Argentinian troops photographed during the invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982



Captured Argentine soldiers who were a part of the 1,200 prisoners taken at Goose Green



A warning sign between Port Stanley and Goose Green

the prisoners had one sort of injury or another. There were probably in the region of 20-30 prisoners on that position. As we looked out towards Goose Green we could see a score of enemy soldiers hot-legging it across the airfield. [They were] on the run, led by somebody we assumed was the company commander on a tractor. Leading the retreat as it were!"

Advance towards Goose Green

After abandoning Darwin Hill and Boca House, the Argentinians were in full retreat towards Goose Green itself in the early afternoon. All four 2 Para companies then approached the settlement from different directions. A Company left Darwin Hill to relieve its namesake settlement on the south east end of the isthmus. B Company circled east to cut off any Argentinian troops that might try to reinforce Goose Green. Meanwhile, D and C Companies sped forward in the centre. "We were aiming straight across the airfield, but were pushed into this defile which was mined so that was a bit of a problem," says Neame. "These were mines that had been rapidly laid with tripwires so you could actually see – or you hoped you could see – where they all were."

Leaving the minefield behind them, Neame's men finally approached Goose Green itself. All four companies had to trek across kilometres of ground to reach both Darwin and Goose Green; the various minefields they encountered slowed down their progress. Therefore it was late afternoon before D Company reached the outskirts of their objective: "Before we could get any closer we had to neutralise the schoolhouse and so further fun and games started. We torched it using phosphorous white grenades. For the children it wasn't an everyday schoolday, [so]

"WE HAD TO NEUTRALISE THE SCHOOLHOUSE AND SO FURTHER FUN AND GAMES STARTED. WE TORCHED IT USING PHOSPHOROUS WHITE GRENADES"

luckily none of them were in there, they were in the community hall."

Now within reach of the settlement, the safety of the civilians became a concern: "They'd all been rounded up and put in the community hall and kept under lock and key for the previous weeks. The Argentinians were obviously worried that they were going to go across country and tip us off. We didn't know where the villagers were before the battle so this was the logic of not going to the settlements in the dark and trying to fight our way through."

As daylight began to fade aircraft from both sides arrived over Goose Green. Argentinian Pucaras planes hit the area around the schoolhouse while three Harrier jets brought much needed relief to the paratroopers by attacking anti-aircraft guns at the settlement with cluster bombs and rockets.

By now, thoughts were focussing on negotiating the surrender of the Argentinians: "Chris Keeble clearly decided that we needed to try and set this up for a negotiated end particularly after our own air strike went in as a show of force. Had we had to fight our way through towards the end of the day it wouldn't have been easy."

With evening approaching more British reinforcements arrived from the north to assist 2 Para including J Company of 42 Commando. However, they were too late to join in the fighting. Despite the fresh troops, the British decided not to try to enter the settlement

"THE HEADLINES COULD HAVE BEEN, 'ARGENTINIANS REPEL PARA ATTACK ON GOOSE GREEN'"



***Above:** 2 Para at Port Stanley in 1982 guarding the Argentine prisoners of war*



***Above:** The temporary resting place for those killed in action from 2 Para including Colonel H Jones*

until the next day: "We hunkered down in this minefield. I, nevertheless, felt instinctively that the day was going to be ours and I don't know how you can quite explain that feeling. It's a gut feeling really but I could have been wrong. We would have had a much more anxious night had we known there were still about 1,000 Argentinians in Goose Green. It wouldn't have been beyond the wit of a professional enemy with a bit of initiative that night to have fighting patrols and that would have created enormous damage for us."

Luckily for 2 Para, the Argentinians did not attack and the British were bolstered by resupplies of ammunition during the night. Two Argentinian prisoners were sent by Chris Keeble to negotiate unconditional terms of surrender. The negotiations lasted throughout the night.

The next morning the Argentinians accepted defeat and surrendered to the British. The Paratroopers were generous: "You had to let them surrender with honour as it were. It was quite conventional and traditional, and that I think played cleverly to the Argentinian psyche." D Company's role during the surrender ceremony was to "not directly interfere and to surround the open ground where this ceremony was taking place and to interject if it went wrong."

Conservative estimates place the number of prisoners taken as 961 but many are unsure of the true numbers. The scale of the surrender surprised the British: "My Company was down to 100-odd men, slightly less. We were the only troops in sight of where the actual surrender was taking place and it was a fairly jaw-dropping moment as we saw more and more of these Argentinians coming out of the settlement. I remember thinking, 'Jesus there's enough of them here, this is something!' As ever, while it's happening you just stay focussed on what needs to be done".

After the battle, the Paratroopers received a warm welcome from the villagers who treated them as liberators: "An old lady came out of the community hall and was dishing out cigarettes to the Toms. They invited us into their houses, which had been taken over by the Argentinians. Many of them were in a pretty dreadful state." In the immediate aftermath, the trauma the soldiers had been through began to tell. "The day after the surrender we began to think about

RIFLES OF WAR – THE FN FAL

THE RIFLES AND MACHINE GUNS OF BOTH THE ARGENTINE AND BRITISH ARMIES DURING THE FALKLANDS WAR WERE REMARKABLY SIMILAR



Bursts fired from the Argentine FAL tended to be inaccurate due to the punishing recoil of the 7.62mm round

FABRIQUE NATIONALE FAL

CALIBRE: 7.62X51MM MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 20

The Argentine Army issued a selective fire version of the FN FAL, some with folding stocks; otherwise the rifle was essentially the same weapon that their British adversaries who coveted the full automatic capability of the Argentine version. A number of captured Argentine FALs were later used by the SAS.

"THE L1A1, OR SLR, WAS THE STANDARD RIFLE OF THE BRITISH ARMY FROM THE 1950S TO THE LATE 1980S WHEN IT WAS REPLACED BY THE SA80"



Along with only firing single shots, the British version featured a folding cocking handle

L1A1 SLR (SELF LOADING RIFLE)

CALIBRE: 7.62X51MM
MAGAZINE CAPACITY: 20

The L1A1, or SLR, was the standard rifle of the British Army from the 1950s to the late 1980s when it was replaced by the SA80. This British version of the Belgian FAL was modified to fire semi-automatic only. It served with distinction in the Falklands where its accuracy and stopping power were appreciated.

it a bit. A number of my younger Toms were reporting sick with trench foot and other minor ailments. It didn't ring quite right with me, not being in a peat bog for a few days they should be okay. I thought: 'I'm not sure this is a real medical problem. I think what they really need is a little reassurance.' I just said, 'No one goes through a regimental aid post without seeing my sergeant-major'. In his own sweet way he gave them the reassurance they needed and the trickle of people going sick died away."

In the aftermath

The Argentinians had lost 45-50 killed in action, while 2 Para had suffered 17 fatalities at Goose Green. Neame states the battle was important for the course of the conflict: "Had we just done a raid, met opposition and withdrawn I think there would have been, and I give 'H' the credit for grasping this, a real risk of it being spun as an Argentinian success. The headlines could have been, 'Argentinians repel Para attack on Goose Green'. 'H' was clear, 'You can't just go and raid. If we're going down there we've got to do this job properly' and again it goes back to the leadership he provided. In his view a raid wasn't a proper mission."

In the scenario of a raid, the impact would have been detrimental to the British campaign. "Morale would have been not at all good. The implications in Whitehall would have been very serious indeed. So [Goose Green] avoided that and the other point is that here was this victory against all odds. I think it was tremendously important because on a morale and mental level from that point on we had won the war. There's no question that from that moment the Argentinians were intent on surviving, certainly in terms of their army."

The dispute over the islands is still ongoing: "The irony of it all is, if the Argentinians hadn't invaded the Falklands in 1982, I believe that by now the likelihood would have been that [they] would be under some form of Argentinian control. The British government weren't particularly interested in the islands, in some ways it was a problem for them that they wanted to get rid of… Once [Argentina] had invaded all that comes off the table and I cannot see that sort of sovereignty now changing for 200 years at least. It's a very long view and I don't think politicians have that…."

Neame is clear that the war was worth fighting: "There were no doubts at all. 'H' used to stir up the battalion and say, 'Come on, we're doing this for Maggie!' There was an element that we were doing it for the cause. Clearly we had to go but we were also professional soldiers and this was something we were going to have to do."

"HAD WE JUST DONE A RAID, MET OPPOSITION AND WITHDRAWN I THINK THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN, AND I GIVE 'H' THE CREDIT FOR GRASPING THIS, A REAL RISK OF IT BEING SPUN AS AN ARGENTINIAN SUCCESS"



The Argentine Military Cemetery at Darwin, East Falkland

THE ULYSSES TRUST

TO STRIVE, TO SEEK, TO FIND, AND NOT TO YIELD

SINCE 1992 PHIL NEAME HAS BEEN HEAVILY INVOLVED IN CHARITY WORK HELPING TO FUND EXPEDITIONS FOR VOLUNTEER RESERVES AND CADET FORCES

After leading the first attempted British winter ascent of Mount Everest in 1992 with the Territorial Army, Neame set up the Ulysses Trust to fund further expeditions. "It provides funds to help and encourage reserve forces and cadet units to undertake challenging and adventurous expeditions," Neame explains. "We provide a relatively small percentage of the funds that it costs but we'll support almost anything. We don't just support flagship projects like Everest in winter, we'll also support cadet units going off and doing an expedition in North Wales, for example. It's varied and as inclusive as possible and especially giving the cadets an opportunity to do things that are good for their personal development, which they might otherwise never do. We help about 2,000 individuals a year and we dish out a little over £200,000 annually in grants so it makes a difference." For more information visit www.ulyssestrust.co.uk.

"IT PROVIDES FUNDS TO HELP AND ENCOURAGE RESERVE FORCES AND CADET UNITS TO UNDERTAKE CHALLENGING AND ADVENTUROUS EXPEDITIONS"

THE ULYSSES TRUST

***Below:** In 1992 Phil Neame led the first attempted British winter ascent on Mount Everest. This expedition led to the foundation of the Ulysses Trust*



Images: Alamy, Corbis, Getty, Rex Features



✪ BRF VANTAGE POINT

View of Musa Qala on 10 December 2007, as seen by soldiers of the British Brigade Reconnaissance Force (BRF), from a ridge overlooking the town. The BRF not only helped to clear the route for the 12-mile long convoy of vehicles approaching the town, but it also offered support to American units involved in the main assault.

✪ THE 'GREEN BELT'

Musa Qala was the largest town in Afghanistan to be in Taliban hands at the time of the operation, nestled in the so-called 'green zone of fertile land irrigated by the Musaqara River.



APACHE HELICOPTER
As US paratroopers cleared the streets of Musa Qala, AH-64 Apache helicopters provided air support, engaging Taliban positions throughout the town. The Taliban in turn targeted the Apaches with RPGs and the half-inch rounds of their 'Dushka' heavy machine guns.

MUSA QALA
Preventing the town from suffering too much damage was a key aim of the mission, as destroyed buildings would only turn the population against the liberating forces. Despite this, the town bore the scars of many earlier battles and some air strikes were necessary to neutralise Taliban resistance.

BATTLE OF MUSA QALA

— HELMAND PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN —
7-12 DECEMBER 2007

Musa Qala had been the scene of serious fighting before – the previous year, a British garrison was besieged for several months in an action hailed as a modern-day Rorke's Drift. Following this, however, a deal was struck with local tribal leaders that ought to have kept the town free from both Taliban and foreign forces, but the Taliban were soon back in control.

The possibility of a prominent Taliban commander defecting raised interest in a mission to retake the town, but what was originally to be a supported tribal uprising gradually turned into something much more substantial, with a multinational force including British, American and Afghan soldiers, supported by massive air power. The operation was to be overseen by a British commander, Major-General Andrew Mackay, but it was Afghan National Army (ANA) units that would make up the bulk of the force, and it was to be US paratroopers who would tackle the dirty work of actually clearing the city.

In the endless struggle to win over local opinion, it was recognised that simply destroying the town to drive out the Taliban was not an option. Likewise, allowing the ANA units to take the credit for taking the town was important, as it would convince the population that they were being liberated by their own government, rather than foreigners.

The task force assembled for the assault included a 2,500-strong ANA brigade, 600 US paratroopers, US special forces 'A-teams' and 1,200 British troops (including B Company, 2nd Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment, the 'Green Howards'). Attempts were made to clear as much of the civilian population as possible by the dropping of leaflets over the town, and the area was sealed off by two British blocking forces to the south.

Finally, a diversionary assault was made by B Company 2 Yorks to the southwest (where Russian troops had attacked more than 30 years earlier), to mask the true target areas. Late on 7 December, 600 US paratroopers landed outside the town and marched through the night to be in position to attack the next morning.

The three companies each targeted a different part of the town, with the intention being to convince the Taliban that resistance was futile. Despite this, all three were engaged in heavy fighting as A Company secured the high ground around the Roshan Tower, B Company moved into the north of the town and C Company advanced from the south. With fierce street fighting taking place through 8 and 9 December, the Taliban seemed determined to hold out. They not only mounted strong resistance in the town, they also launched attacks on Sangin, to the south, where British units including Gurkhas saw action. It was a clear attempt to draw attention away from the main assault and perhaps claim a victory that would taint any ISAF success at Musa Qala.

A series of air attacks, starting late on 9 December, seems to have decided the issue, with American AC-130 'Spectre' gunships hunting down and eliminating Taliban fighters through the night. Perhaps seeing the inevitability of defeat, Taliban leaders appear to have left the town around this time, and their fighters began to follow suit.

On 11 December, the Afghan brigade, having waited for the Americans to clear the town, began to move in to liberate Musa Qala. The town was officially declared taken the following day.

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International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

TROOPS 4,500

DIVISIONS 4

TANKS 1 TANK BRIGADE



Major General Andrew Mackay

LEADER

Had experience in Northern Ireland and the Balkans before becoming the commander of Task Force Helmand.
STRENGTH Skilled in counter-insurgency tactics.
WEAKNESS Tortuous chain of command in Afghanistan.



B Company 2 Yorks

KEY UNIT

A light mechanised infantry battalion, deployed in Afghanistan in a mentoring role to work alongside the Afghan National Army units.
STRENGTH Close-knit unit, drawing on the history of the 'Green Howards'.
WEAKNESS Vector armoured vehicles vulnerable to mines.

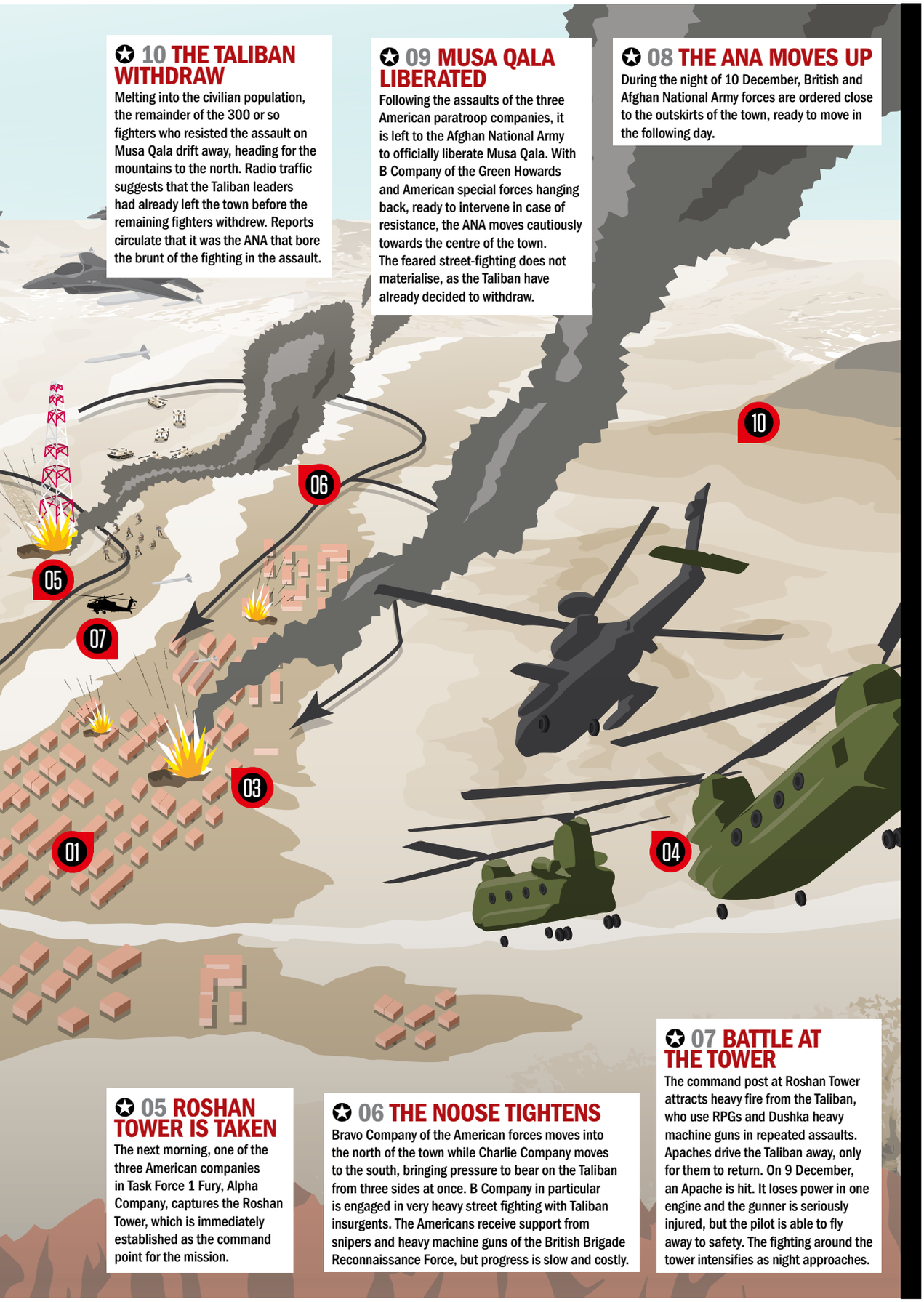


SA80 Individual Weapon

KEY WEAPON

An adaptable infantry weapon, fitted with a 30-round magazine and capable of mounting a grenade launcher.
STRENGTH Highly accurate, up to 775rpm rate of fire.
WEAKNESS Reliability impaired in hot and dry climates.





✪ 10 THE TALIBAN WITHDRAW

Melting into the civilian population, the remainder of the 300 or so fighters who resisted the assault on Musa Qala drift away, heading for the mountains to the north. Radio traffic suggests that the Taliban leaders had already left the town before the remaining fighters withdrew. Reports circulate that it was the ANA that bore the brunt of the fighting in the assault.

✪ 09 MUSA QALA LIBERATED

Following the assaults of the three American paratroop companies, it is left to the Afghan National Army to officially liberate Musa Qala. With B Company of the Green Howards and American special forces hanging back, ready to intervene in case of resistance, the ANA moves cautiously towards the centre of the town. The feared street-fighting does not materialise, as the Taliban have already decided to withdraw.

✪ 08 THE ANA MOVES UP

During the night of 10 December, British and Afghan National Army forces are ordered close to the outskirts of the town, ready to move in the following day.

✪ 05 ROSHAN TOWER IS TAKEN

The next morning, one of the three American companies in Task Force 1 Fury, Alpha Company, captures the Roshan Tower, which is immediately established as the command point for the mission.

✪ 06 THE NOOSE TIGHTENS

Bravo Company of the American forces moves into the north of the town while Charlie Company moves to the south, bringing pressure to bear on the Taliban from three sides at once. B Company in particular is engaged in very heavy street fighting with Taliban insurgents. The Americans receive support from snipers and heavy machine guns of the British Brigade Reconnaissance Force, but progress is slow and costly.

✪ 07 BATTLE AT THE TOWER

The command post at Roshan Tower attracts heavy fire from the Taliban, who use RPGs and Dushka heavy machine guns in repeated assaults. Apaches drive the Taliban away, only for them to return. On 9 December, an Apache is hit. It loses power in one engine and the gunner is seriously injured, but the pilot is able to fly away to safety. The fighting around the tower intensifies as night approaches.

Taliban Forces

TROOPS 300-2,000

Abdul-Bari Akhund

LEADER

Governor of Helmand Province during the period of Taliban rule, committed to resisting foreign influence in his country.
STRENGTH Exerted control of countryside (where most Afghans live).
WEAKNESS Limited control in urban areas.



Taliban insurgents

KEY UNIT

The Taliban insurgency fought against the Afghan government and troops of foreign powers including Great Britain and the United States.
STRENGTHS Resourceful, idealistic and committed to their cause.
WEAKNESS Often equipped with outdated weaponry.



DShK 1938

KEY WEAPON

Nicknamed the 'Dushka' ('Sweetie' in Russian), this World War Two-vintage heavy machine gun was still an effective weapon in 2007.
STRENGTHS Tough, durable and packing a powerful punch.
WEAKNESS Cumbersome to move from position to position.

© Ed Crooks, Getty Images, Alamy





ICONIC MOMENT

ADDRESSING THE TROOPS

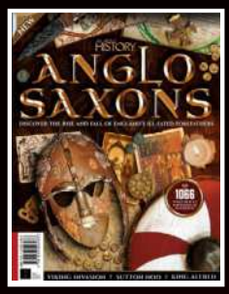
British prime minister Gordon Brown visits British troops at the time of the assault on Musa Qala

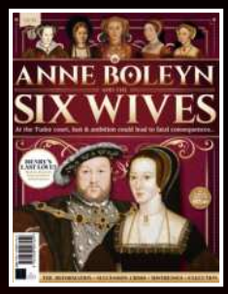
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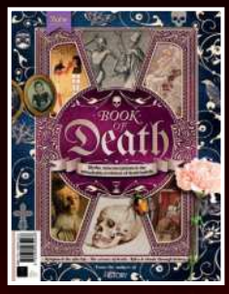


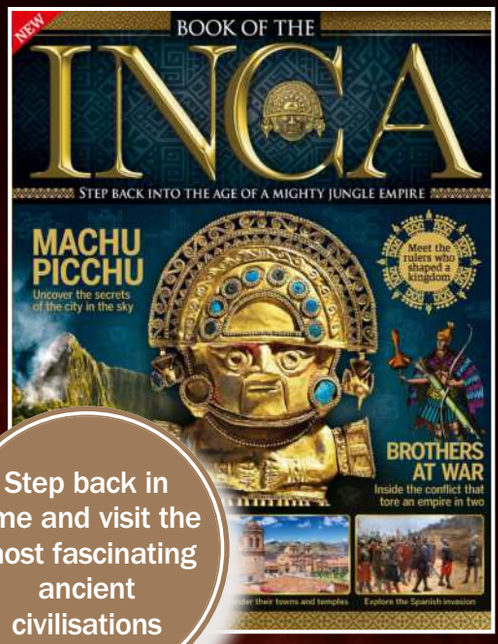
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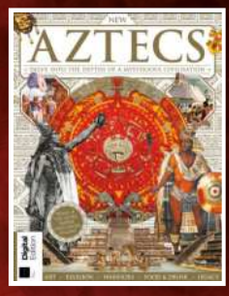






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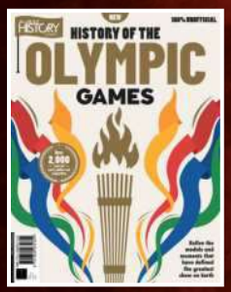


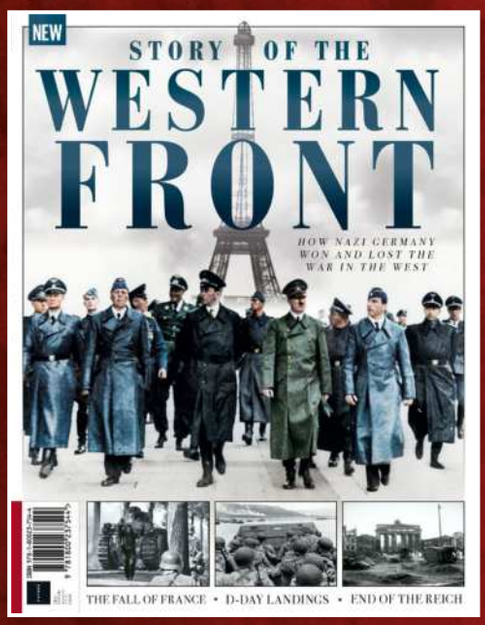


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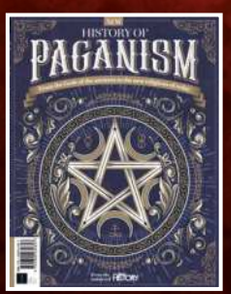


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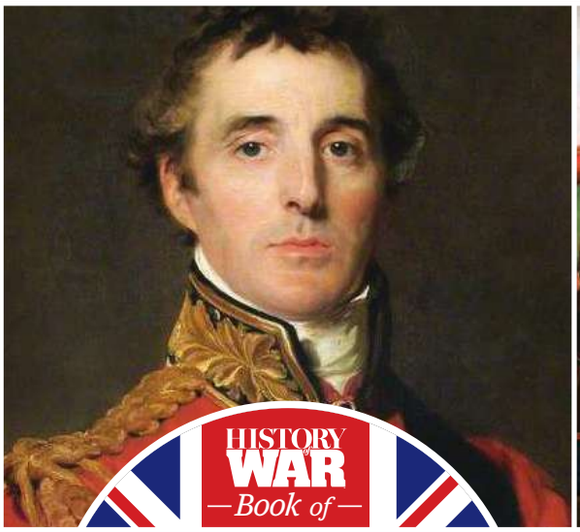
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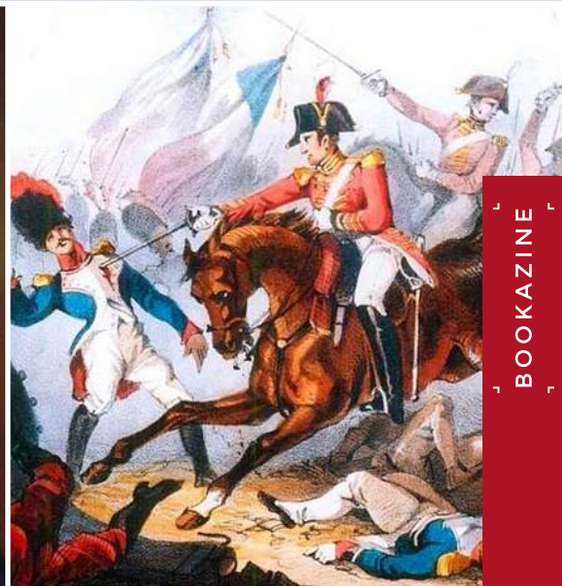
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